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CANONBURY HOLT

A LIFE'S PROBLEM SOLVED.

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CANONBURY HOLT:

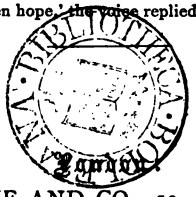
A Life's Problem Solved.

BY

EMMA JANE WORBOISE,

Author of "Chrystabel," "Nobly Born," "Thornycroft Hall," "Overdale," "Grey and Gold," &c., &c.

"A still small voice spake unto me,
'Thou art so full of misery,
Were it not better not to be?
'Twere better not to breathe or speak
Than cry for strength, remaining weak,
And seem to find, but still to seek.'
* * * * * *
A second voice was at mine ear,
A little whisper, silver-clear,
A murmur, 'Be of better cheer.'
Such seemed the whisper at my side;
'What is it thou knowest, sweet voice?' I cried;
'A hidden hope,' the voice replied."



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CANONBURY HOLT:

A Life's Problem Solved.

CHAPTER I.

CHALFONTS.

A FAIRER spot than Chalfonts I think the sun never shone upon. It lies in a luxuriantly wooded and well watered valley, shut in north, east, and partly west, by low green hills ; to the south are swelling ridgy moorlands, overlooking the sea, which forms here a charming little bay, between two bold, rugged headlands — Abbot's Head and Bigland Point. The moorlands are glorious with brake and heather in the summer-time, and always they are "right bonnie," as the Chalfonts people tell you, because you can see from them such a marvellous prospect as you can only see in that wild and beautiful north country. You can see the great bay, of which Cockleham Bay is but an inlet. You can see a vast sweep of country beyond the shining sands —the treacherous sands, that cover many an unknown grave,—grey fells and rocky scaur ; and beyond them all to the south-west, the dark, wavy line of the Lunechester Fells ; and still farther, quite away to the west, the mighty, square-browed Ingleborough.

Chalfonts is a town, a veritable market-town, with rights and privileges that were accorded to it in the elder days. Considering its ancient pretensions, it must once have been of some importance, and perhaps of some ex-

tent, so far as the nature of the ground on which it stood would permit it to extend itself; but now, as you come upon it suddenly, turning the corner of the wild road that wanders round the base of several hills, you think that if a giant haply passed that way he might pick it up, and with a little contrivance put it all comfortably into one of the west-end or west-central squares of London. It is, however, larger than it looks, for the great Priory-church alone occupies much ground; and as you gaze down on Chalfonts from the hill-road, by which, in spite of the conveniences of the new railway, so many people approach it, it seems to you that Chalfonts is all church, so entirely does the ancient sanctuary reduce to insignificance the quaint, grey little town that lies around it. It tells its own story instantly—men came there to build a minster, to found a priory that should endure for ages, and attest to generations yet unborn the piety of their forefathers; they built the church, grander far than many of our minor cathedrals; and between the two rivers, overlooked by wooded hills and rugged moorland, yet within a short distance of the salt-sea water, and not many miles from the fastnesses of the mountains, arose a pile of wondrous beauty—lofty choir, and dark-carved stalls, and battlemented towers,—and by-and-by, as a natural result, a quiet, grave, monastic little town.

There is nothing now of monasticism about Chalfonts, save the air which is given to it by its glorious church, and its antique, time-worn buildings, here and there surviving from the wreck of the Priory itself. It is a cheery little town, when you are fairly in its market-place, about which on a hot summer's afternoon, if it be not market-day, you may haply see a dog or two, and a showy chanticleer, with his clucking hens, but scarcely a human creature, unless it be some one at the door of one of the quaint houses, "speering aboot," and wondering who the stranger may be, and if he wants the clerk, who keeps the keys of

the wonderful Priory-church, and shows it very knowledgeably.

You are soon through the town, and you can, if you please, go on to Aldingham Hall, where there is a sylvan park, with beautiful views of the mountain-land beyond, and a gallery of pictures well worth the seeing. In fact, Aldingham is a celebrated show-place, as all in the county know. Or you can by going north get into the ravines, which will lead you into a grander region than that in which Chalfonts luxuriates; or, turning south and skirting the moors, you may get upon "the mosses," peat-lands long ago redeemed from the sea; and you may sketch Rusholm Tower, that grey ruin to the right; or go down and talk with the fishwives and cocklers, in Cockleham, or roam along the lonely shore, not so lonely, however, but that from time to time a train dashes by, on its way to the good town of St. Ulpha's, where there is iron ore, and something like a population.

About a mile from Chalfonts, in a rich little valley of its own, stands an old manor-house, commonly called the Holt Farm, being indeed an appendage of a grand, but rather dilapidated mansion, at the head of one of the "mosses," commanding extensive views both over land and sea, and called Canonbury Holt. The foundations of the Holt were said to antedate those of the Priory. There were even legends, and plausible ones too, of the Holt as a building of renown, having existed in the time of the Saxons; but the present edifice certainly took its rise in the fourteenth century, when a certain canon of the venerable Abbey of Bekanks-Gill was interred there in a private chapel by his brother, the Prior of Chalfonts—hence the name of the estate, *Canon's Bury*. The Holt was then a mere irregular mass of farm-buildings, kept up for the convenience of the good brethren of Chalfonts; but soon it became a handsome and spacious mansion; park-lands were enclosed, and certain manorial privileges were

assigned to it by the Prior of Chalfonts and the Abbot of Bekanks-Gill, on the borders of whose joint territories it lay. Centuries rolled on, and Chalfonts, together with Canonbury, and the more stately abbey before referred to, prospered exceedingly in their deep seclusion of sea and crag and hill. In 1537 Bekanks-Gill surrendered to the King, and the monastic institution at Chalfonts was immediately afterwards suppressed, though the beautiful Priory-church was suffered to remain uninjured. But all the territories which had hitherto been in the hands of the monks of Chalfonts reverted to the Crown, and as years passed away, became the property of several persons. The vast estates of Bekanks were at last settled in the possession of the Duke of Aldingham; Chalfonts was variously distributed, and in the reign of Elizabeth, Canonbury Holt and the farm thereunto appertaining, with certain rights of "jetsam and flotsam," and lordship of certain rocky heights, supposed to contain vast treasures of lead and iron ores, devolved to a family of ancient and good repute, of the name of Thurston.

Many a year went and came; the Stuart reigned and fell; Cromwell's Ironsides swept victoriously over the hard-won field of Marston Moor; the ungracious and ungrateful Charles returned to the throne of his ancestors; the second James departed from these realms, and Dutch William and the daughters of the fallen Prince reigned in his stead; and "good old George the Third," as people loved, and perhaps still love to call him, was in his youthful prime, when the first waves began to ebb in the full tide of the prosperity of the Thurstons. They had farmed and they had mined, and greatly increased their possessions; their sons were a gallant stock, and bore themselves full proudly as the masters of the soil, and their daughters, fair and stately dames, had matched themselves with some of the best families in that part of the country; and with their pride—perhaps I ought to call it

rather their dignity—was mingled rare benevolence and courtesy. All the outlying lands about Chalfonts, and some of the fisheries of Cockleham and Flookbridge, belonged to them, and numerous were their tenants and dependants; yet, when the evil day arrived, not one voice but was uplifted in sorrow and dismay, not one tenant gloried in a tyrant's fall, not one peasant laughed to know that the haughty had fallen from his place.

How the reverses which laid low this honourable house arose, it boots not here to tell. It would seem as if the hand of the Almighty were laid upon it, so that for a season it might thrive no more; nothing the Thurstons touched, after a certain period, would prosper, even though it had succeeded in other hands, and succeeded again when the Holt people had lost their interest in it. At last there came a day when ruin presented itself as inevitable. Walter Thurston, older in care and sorrow than in years, died very suddenly, leaving his grandson, a mere youth, still in his minority, to an inheritance such as had never before devolved on one of his name. Indeed, the name, still stainless, still revered, was about all that he could honourably lay claim to. The Holt was still his own, but he had no means of keeping it up, and for the last twenty years it had been suffering from lack of needful repairs.

The whole estate was in the hands of creditors; and after awhile Raymond Thurston, a sad and solitary man, went away, no one certainly knew whither. Some said he went to fight in the war that just then broke out in America; others that he was in India; others that he was on the European continent. Presently, Canonbury Holt was sold—not, however, without much litigation, and many misgivings on the part of its new owners, lest their title should be in any way unsound, and certainly in the terms of the purchase there was one clause which, in point of fact, reduced the position of the new masters of

the Holt from that of absolute possessors to leasehold tenants. It was specially provided by this clause that if the Thurstons could repurchase their lost estates at any time within one hundred years, they should, upon due and stipulated notice, be given up to them.

For many a day the townspeople of quaint old Chalfonts, and the cottagers among the hills, and the fishermen upon the lonely shore, spoke among themselves of the time when the Thurstons should enjoy their own again, very much as the Jacobites a few years earlier had expressed their sanguine anticipations of the Stuart's return. But as time rolled on its way, and the century waned to its close, fewer and fewer of the old men who remembered the dark day of the Thurstons were left alive; a new generation arose, to whom the old family of Canonbury Holt was a mere shadowy reminiscence. The almost feudal feeling which had distinguished the followers of the ancient house died out. The Holt changed owners or tenants more than once, and finally, in the early part of the present century, it passed into the possession of a rich Manchester family, in whom the sturdy dalesmen and the old-fashioned townsfolk took little interest. Then the heirs of this wealthy *parvenu* family quarrelled among themselves —quarrelled bitterly, furiously, and to the death, as only kinsmen estranged can quarrel. There was a tedious lawsuit, which terminated in a still more tedious Chancery case, and finally Canonbury Holt was shut up, only a small staff of servants being left on the premises, who were paid by, and accountable to, a Ribbleton lawyer, who in his turn was responsible to a greater man in London.

Again the years rolled on, and it came to be noised abroad in the quiet valley of Chalfonts that the great Canonbury Case was ended. But no one knew *how* it ended; no one knew to whom the Holt actually belonged; no one, in fact, cared very much about it. The Irish O'Grady's had not propitiated the people of the district;

their free-and-easy hospitality and rollicking manners had not won the hearts of the tenantry, or of the county families, who at first seemed inclined to cultivate such inmacy as distances and wild, cross-country roads and a rather formal etiquette permitted. Still less had either party inclined to the Clegsons, the autocrats of the cotton-market, and their desertion of the mansion, and their subsequent disasters, sometimes furnished matter for a winter's tale, or a summer's gossip by the stream, but was well-nigh forgotten at the period when my story commences, as it was thirty years since the notable quarrel and law-suit, "Clegson *versus* Clegson," first took its rise. The story of the Thurstons had become a mere legend of the past; no one ever dreamed of a true heir to the estates making his appearance; no one had any idea whether the name of Thurston was extinct or not; no one seemed to suppose that the solitary old mansion would ever be inhabited again. Thus matters stood when the first half of the nineteenth century was approaching its completion. The "St. Ulpha's Railway" was talked about, and that was all; two coaches, one going north, the other south, passed through Chalfonts twice a week, and the quaint little town wore its old-world aspect, almost as in the days when the Thurstons were masters of the land.

CHAPTER II.

ANNE AND AMY.

"ANNE! Cousin Anne! *Will* you walk a little slower? Really, if you were to march at such a rate through the parks, or in Kensington Gardens, or in any civilised place, indeed, you would be stared at—really stared at!"

"I beg your pardon, Amy, I had no idea that I was going beyond my ordinary pace."

"Perhaps you are not; but then, what a pace that is! I am really out of breath. And this horrible hilly country! I do not believe there is a whole acre of really flat land anywhere in it. Nature seems to delight in making you pant up these mountain sides, just on purpose to go shaking down again. It must be very trying to the lungs; I wonder all the Fellshire girls do not die of consumption before they are twenty-one."

"No danger of that, Amy. Kensington girls are infinitely more in danger of decline than we Fellshire maidens, who climb the hills day after day, and inhale that perfection of all atmospheres—mountain and sea breezes mingled. You will be quite another woman when you go back south again."

The speakers were two girls: the one called Cousin Anne was the elder, but she could not be more than two-and-twenty years of age. She was rather tall if you came actually to take her inch by inch, but she was so perfectly proportioned that she did not seem above the middle stature. Her figure was well developed, lithe, and graceful; there was something singularly free and elastic in the light, quick step, which scarcely pressed the turfy path. A clear and lustrous rather than brilliant eye; crisp, glossy curls, flowing in rich luxuriance, and complexion far from delicate, but pure and healthy in its colouring; rosy lips and regular, faultless teeth, made a very pretty picture of a north-country maiden in her bloom, and testified beside to a sound constitution and a thorough organisation. In the light of her earnest eyes, that might be any colour till you came to look into them; in her expressive smile, in her easy tread, and perfectly unstudied but most graceful motion; above all, in her soft, ringing tones, you could read that Anne Musgrave was a young woman of great energy and decision of character; cheerful as the day, yet thoughtful,

and even in some measure reserved: full of life and hope, yet gentle in her tendencies, and always sweet and feminine in speech and action. That Anne had a brave, true spirit of her own you could not doubt, if only once you met her quiet, steady gaze; that a matchless constancy was inherent in her nature you would soon perceive, if you talked with her gravely, and were worthy to comprehend a soul so deep and pure as hers; and if you were gifted with those intuitive perceptions which to some few stand nearly in the place of second sight, you could not fail to discern that her patience was unfailing, her powers of endurance marvellous.

She had had little to endure so far, for she lived quite happily alone with her mother and brother at the Holt Farm. She was a gentlewoman by birth, her thoroughbred air and tone proclaimed that fact at once; but she had not been educated to consider attention to household duties vulgar or degrading. Hers, from the very hour of leaving school, had been a busy life, but yet a life of such calm, perfect happiness, as would seem to a careless looker-on almost idyllic in its quiet, but not inactive beauty.

Her companion was Amy Temple, her eldest cousin, and the daughter of Mrs. Musgrave's only brother, who had married and settled in the neighbourhood of London. Miss Temple was just nineteen, and she had been for some time in a languishing state of health, and after trying Brighton, and Hastings, and Cromer, and cod-liver oil, and medicated baths, and port wine and quinine, and tonics generally, it occurred one day to her father that it might be a good thing to send her to her aunt for a few months, that the effect of early hours, bracing air, and outdoor exercise might at least be tried.

Mrs. Temple protested against this plan; she could not bear the idea of her delicate daughter being banished to a region so uncivilised—to a land where fashions slowly

travelled, where balls were never, or at least very seldom given, where the last new novel was unattainable, where there was no "society," no flower-shows, no concerts, no promenade, no beaux, no *anything!* Only farmhouse ways, and keen blasts to give Amy inflammation of the chest, and rude hectoring blasts from the coast and from the mountain sides to roughen Amy's ivory skin, and turn her delicate blush-roses to flaming red, and, in short, ruin her exquisite complexion. But Mr. Temple had taken counsel with the family physician, and he had spoken his mind very plainly, and declared to the anxious parent that there was really very little the matter with Miss Temple; but that still her constitution, never very robust, was now so injured by late hours, overheated rooms, and a life of dissipated idleness, that it had become a sort of soil wherein the seeds of actual disease, once sown, would take deep root, nor be easily eradicated. In short, the young girl might, if not treated properly, become an invalid for life.

What treatment then could be "proper" was the father's anxious question. Change of air had already been tried, and regimen, and medicines, and with no good result. The ungallant M.D. suggested that the young lady should make the beds, or knead the dough for family consumption, or, best of all, turn milkmaid, or anything that would make her honestly tired, instead of dishonestly languid; anything that would give her lungs free play, and take her into the open air. Now, though the good doctor's advice was certainly far-fetched and impracticable, the mention of the milkmaid brought to Mr. Temple's recollection the healthy atmosphere of Chalfonts. Five years before he had visited his sister, and he had been charmed with the peaceful seclusion of her home; he had entered with zest into farming theories and practice; he had felt his chest expand and his heart grow light as he stood upon the breezy moorland, drinking in the sweet, pure

airs that wandered over land and sea. Above all things, he had admired and appreciated Anne! Her ceaseless diligence, her quiet happiness, her blooming countenance, her song, so like the lark's, and her cultivated mind, had charmed him, as he, the fastidious man of literature, was rarely charmed; and he had quitted the Holt Farm, promising to return in the course of the next summer, and to bring his two eldest girls, Amy and Bertie, to make acquaintance with their cousin Anne.

We all know how easy it is to make such promises with the firm intention of redeeming them, and how equally easy it is, when the time draws near for their fulfilment, to find excuses, plausible enough, and to break one's word,—or at least break it for a season, meaning to make all right some day, when opportunity shall favour. Mr. Temple was perfectly sincere when he assured his sister and his niece that a few months would reunite them, and bring new friends to their threshold; but a score of hindrances arose. Mrs. Temple had no opinion of the semi-barbarous north, and for a woman of decidedly lymphatic temperament, and a passivity of character that would have been amusing had it not been tiresome, was violently angry at her elegant, accomplished town-bred girls being compared with a mere rosy rustic like Anne Musgrave. At least, it would have been violent anger in any one else; but in Mrs. Temple it, whatever *it* was, discontent, annoyance, or maternal jealousy, vented itself in a flood of weak, vapouring words, and plaintive lamentations on her own hard lot, in having a husband who always wanted something that he could not have, and on her children's luckless fate in having a father who could not appreciate their singular perfections. So she threw every hindrance in her power in the way of the projected visit, and though her hindrances were so feeble and so puerile that Mr. Temple scarcely noted them, they had their weight, for he thought that over her young daughters her maternal

influence, so far as it was not decidedly injurious, should be unchecked.

And so time passed on, and Amy "came out," and nearly killed herself in a sort of half-hearted pursuit of pleasure, and her mother, to whom the exertion of playing chaperone was a real trouble, declared that society was quite too much for her, and that the girls—there were four more after Amy—must in future go out with their father. In excuse for Mrs. Temple's indolence, I must just say that she was born in the West Indies, that she had a tropical constitution, and her training had fitted her for *siestas* and for reveries, and for little else. She had been eminently beautiful, and was still a fair, sweet-looking woman, and Mr. Temple, in spite of a thousand disappointments, loved her heartily, and strove by every means in his power to atone for her deficiencies. He was a man of good private fortune; and literature—to which he had devoted himself in the first place merely to occupy his leisure time, and perhaps to still the craving for companionship which he knew he could never find in his wife—became to him, in process of years, not only his life-work, but the source of a large increase of income.

So it was determined that Amy should be sent to her Aunt Musgrave, and Bertie, only one year younger than herself, was to accompany her. Mrs. Temple, in her languid way, still protested, saying, "Really, Mr. Temple, it is very strange of you to think of sending the girls where they can have no advantages, and where they will certainly lose tone."

Mr. Temple was slightly displeased. "Lose tone, Emilia? You forget that Mrs. Musgrave is my sister!"

"Ah! I did not mean that. I meant—I am not quite sure what I meant, my dear; but you know one does not find much style among the rustics; and though of course Hannah and her daughter are quite the thing, still, you know—" and Mrs. Temple's sentence died away in inco-

herent murmurs; she never could so arrange her thoughts as to express herself fully and lucidly; the mental effort was too much for her, and a serious conversation on any subject always ended in a fit of nervous depression or a headache.

"As for advantages," resumed Mr. Temple, "there will be more than I can name. The clear, bracing air, the lovely walks, the 'early to bed, and early to rise,' the new milk, Anne's society——"

"A strong, hearty girl like Anne Musgrave will never understand the delicacy of a fragile blossom like my Amy."

"You don't know Anne; she has astonishingly quick perceptions, and sympathy is a part of her very nature. But as Bertie is going too, Amy will have some one at hand who will understand her weaknesses and her requirements. I always promised my little Bertie that she should see the mountains."

"I am not sure that Bertie *will* be a comfort to her sister. Bertie is so rapid in her movements; she takes things so violently. There is not the least repose about her."

Now, Bertie was a bright-eyed, lively little maiden of eighteen; she was quick-tempered and warm-hearted, but in her horror of tortuous ways, and in her love of independent thought and action, she sometimes wounded sorely when she intended but to counsel, even perhaps to comfort. She was decidedly her father's favourite child, for there were certain affinities between them which drew them together constantly, and it was a real sacrifice to Mr. Temple to send away the only one of his household with whom he could happily and reasonably converse; but he was an unselfish man, and his love was not of that species which regards chiefly its own gratification. He knew that Bertie would gain health of body as well as of mind in that sweet northern land; and he thought also that

intercourse with Anne, and the motherly influence of his sister, Mrs. Musgrave, would tend to confirm Bertie in all the goodness that was in her, and also to smooth away certain roughnesses and inequalities of character which threatened to make her anything but an universal favourite.

It was already late in the autumn, and Mr. Temple anxiously inquired if it were not *too late* for the north country. "No!" was the doctor's prompt reply; "with common prudence, and plenty of warm clothing, there is nothing to be afraid of. As a rule, a northern winter has a worse character than it deserves, and Miss Amy wants bracing, *bracing* in every way, Mr. Temple. Let me hear of her sliding on the pools, and snow-balling on the moors, and walking herself warm on a clear cold morning when the mercury is down to 25 degrees. Let me hear of her eating brown bread and butter, and drinking new milk, and helping Mrs. Musgrave's dairy-maid—then I shall have some hopes of her; as for Miss Bertie, let us hope all the blood in her veins may not be turned into quicksilver, lest, running wild among the mountains, we may never be able to catch her any more!"

Mrs. Temple talked a good deal about the clothing that must be procured: but it was Bertie and her father who saw to furs, and winseys, and water-proofs; they made all the purchases, from seal-skin cloaks to dreadnought boots, and they made all arrangements for the journey; and Mrs. Temple only roused herself on the morning of their departure to wonder whether they had everything they wanted. Amy wondered, too, but felt pretty well assured that Bertie and papa would "see to things;" and so, confident from experience, she set out on her journey, not, however, with any anticipations of a pleasurable nature. She had caught the notion from her mother that she was going into banishment, and somehow her impressions concerning her aunt and her cousin were the reverse

of favourable. Bertie was in the wildest spirits at the thought of the new scenes and the new fresh life that lay before her.

One foolish thing Mrs. Temple did as she bade her daughters good-bye. She adjured them not to get damp feet, not to go out when the wind was in the east or in the north, not to get chilblains on their fingers, not to neglect their complexions; which, perhaps, was all well enough, though mistaken and unnecessary; and no harm would have been done had she stopped at the complexions, and the utility of Shetland veils; but she added, after a pause which showed that something serious was coming,—"And don't, whatever you do, fall in love with your cousin James."

Now, to tell a girl *not* to fall in love with a young man whom she has never seen, and probably never thought of, is about as injudicious a proceeding as any parent or guardian can be guilty of. But, then, Mrs. Temple was by nature injudicious; your plastic, passive, placid women generally are injudicious when they rouse themselves from their torpor, and become for the moment active and animated. Of course "Cousin James" immediately became an important personage in the eyes of both the girls; but Amy answered, "You need not fear, mamma. I, at least, can only be indifferent to a young man who wears hob-nailed shoes and worsted comforters, and who will probably amuse us with the day's adventures—drenching cattle, trying a new plough, driving the sheep to another pasture, and similar bucolic achievements!"

"Such nonsense!" interrupted Bertie, in her own quick way. "I daresay Cousin James is a very charming young man, and I have made up my mind to like him extremely; and I mean to turn farmeress at once. I shall help to churn and to bake, and I shall learn how to make good butter, and I shall study cookery generally. I am horribly afraid of cows, else I should have bought a little

milking-stool and a can for myself, that I might share the labours of the dairy-maid."

"She does not mean it, mamma," said Amy, soothingly; for her mother was looking almost piteously: she never could understand Bertie, who was certainly in the habit of making startling asseverations. "Never fear; she will churn for half-an-hour some morning and then find out that her arms ache to the shoulders, and she will make one pie like gutta-percha and be disgusted with herself; and be quite sure she will never go near anything with horns upon its head. As for James Musgrave, I daresay she will soon find him a terrible bore, with his turnips, and his drills, and his threshing-machines."

Mr. Temple escorted his daughters to the Holt Farm, and remained a week; then he returned home, declaring that Amy had roses on her cheeks already, and ate her breakfast with an appetite, and that Bertie had never been so happy in her life, and had sworn eternal friendship with her cousin Anne. About Cousin James nothing was said, but that he seemed utterly absorbed in agricultural pursuits, and was making quite a model farm of it, and making it pay well, too, into the bargain, which was more than could be said generally for model farming.

It was October when the sisters first became Mrs. Musgrave's visitors, and now it was November, but not the November of mists and rains and mire, the month of insolvencies and suicides, according to the showing of our continental neighbours. It was "St. Martin's little summer;" and the air was clear and mild, and the richly-tinted foliage yet lingered on the trees.

Never had the vale of Chalfonts looked lovelier than it did that afternoon, when Anne Musgrave and Amy Temple looked down upon it from the moorland ridges, which they were crossing in order to make a short cut into the town. They had lost the seaward view, but the landscape

that lay before them was beautiful exceedingly. There was the green valley at their feet, shut in with wooded fell and grey hill-side; there were the two glittering rivers, or rivulets, for they were nothing more, meandering through the quiet meadows, and under the hoary walls of the grand old Priory-church, finding their way to the mosses and the marshes, where they dribbled into the sea by many little channels, the source of those terrible quicksands for which that coast is celebrated. Beyond were the deep woods of Aldingham, and still beyond forest, hill, and crag, the shadowy forms of the giant mountains, rising solemnly through a soft transparent haze of bluish-grey. Only on one lofty peak the slanting sun-rays, westering rapidly, had turned the grey to purple, and Anne knew that ere they returned the valley would be filled with crimson light, that richer radiance would be gleaming in the passes of the hills.

"Is it not glorious?" she said, while they stayed leaning against a boulder, or piece of rock, many tons in weight, that lay upon the slopes. "I suppose I do walk quickly, too quickly for one so delicate as you are; I am really afraid, Amy, that robust health, though the greatest of earthly blessings, may do one harm."

"One may become vulgar, unfeminine, I suppose; rude health is so apt to degenerate into coarseness."

Anne smiled. "I was not thinking of that; it struck me that the constant enjoyment of perfect health, full strength of nerve and muscle, and even spirits, may perhaps tend to make one inconsiderate and unsympathising. I am afraid I have been both to-day. You see, I am never tired, unless I exert myself most wonderfully; and then I just go to bed, and get up next morning as fresh as a daisy. I can climb the hills without pains in my side and catchings in my breath; and my spirits seldom flag. Except once or twice, when I had very real cause, as when my mother was so seriously ill, and when James did not

come home from St. Ulpha's market that stormy night I told you of, I have never in my life felt real depression."

"You are very fortunate, Anne. But now, tell me who lives in that white house at this end of the village? I mean the town—such a town! with one street, and those old towers looking as if they had grown with the hills, instead of being built no one knows how many thousands of years ago!"

"Hundreds of years, you mean. And we do know exactly the date of the Priory-church, and of the buildings that have all disappeared, save that huge gate-tower, and some ancient cloisters and dormitories that lie behind it. The first foundation was as early as——"

"For mercy's sake don't tell me dates; I never remember them; I am not sure whether Alfred the Great reigned before William the Conqueror or after; but I know that Henry VIII., who broke up all these grand old places, succeeded Queen Elizabeth! Now, never mind history and chronology, but answer my question,—who lives at the white house? for it looks visitable."

"Dr. Wilson lives there. He is our medical man, and our friend also; and his house decidedly is visitable. He has been from home lately, or I daresay he would have asked us all to tea."

"Is he the only medical man in Chalfonts?"

"To be sure he is. My dear Amy, invalids are curiosities with us: two doctors would never make a living here. Dr. Wilson not only doctors Chalfonts, Canonbury, and Aldingham, but all the fishing-villages along the shore as far as Abbott's Head, and all the hamlets and villages among the hills, farther than you see."

"Is Dr. Wilson young?"

"About forty, I should say."

"Is he married?"

"No! there is a story about him that I will tell you some day: it is altogether to his honour."

"And the rectory people?"

"They are very nice and good; the eldest Miss Redmayne was married in the spring, and her sisters are staying with her, in Levensdale. They will call upon you when they come back."

"I suppose you never visit at Aldingham?"

"Yes, sometimes, in a formal way; but the Duke has not been there since the Duchess died. She died at Aldingham; it was her favourite place of residence."

"And Canonbury Holt is half a ruin!"

"No, indeed, you cannot call it that; it is a fine old place, and we must go over it some day, soon. And that reminds me we had better hasten on: we have to call at two places in the town, and mamma begged me, if you were not too tired, to take the Holt going back; and I have a message for Mrs. Twentyman."

"Who is she?"

"The housekeeper: a most charming old lady; you cannot fail to fall in love with her."

CHAPTER III.

LYULPH'S MASTER.

THE sun was going down, large and red over the shining sands, when the two girls reached Canonbury Chase. Amy was complaining of being tired: but even her constitutional languor was for the moment dissipated, and she uttered an exclamation of rapture, as, reaching the summit of a little wooded knoll, the whole vast, glorious panorama burst upon her view. Around them lay the ancient Chase, with its venerable gnarled oaks, its dark fir-copses, and its craggy slopes; beyond were the mosses, grey, flat,

and solitary, with here and there a glittering line of trench, that seemed rippling as with molten gold; then a wide salt-marsh, with its sluggish, winding streams, its eerie-looking pools, and its tall, quivering rushes; and then the immeasurable waste of sand; the broad estuary; and far away, the silvery sea-line, that flushed to warmer colours, and mingled with the sunset clouds, even as they gazed. And looking back, there lay the silent fells, rising solemnly beyond the giant hills, black, jagged, and scarred, and awful in their shadowy grandeur.

"I did not think anything on earth could be so fair," said Amy, presently. "I wish Bertie had been with us."

"She will see it nearly as well from the Brow, and I know she will go there."

"Do you often have sunsets like these?"

"Very often; and sometimes they are more beautiful even than this one. Amy, I have seen those high fells that lie beyond yonder heights, behind St. Ulpha's and Bekanks-Gill, so glorious, that I thought I knew what the Mount of Transfiguration must have been. I have seen those sands, wet with the receding tide, one vast sheet of amethyst and pearl. I have seen the ruby-coloured clouds reflected in the streams, and in the channel yonder, till I have felt awed, as if I gazed on the sea of glass mingled with fire, that John the Beloved speaks about. Yes, this is a matchless land of ours; cold, and bleak, and tardy in its springs, I know it is, but where, from the Tweed to the Needles Point, shall we find such beauty, such mingled loveliness and grandeur; such softness, and such sublimity combined, as we find here in Fellshire, and the counties round about? I am very, very proud of my own Chalfonts valley; but we must not linger: if you are tired we can rest for a few minutes in Mrs. Twentyman's room."

The girls went on, and presently had reached the side-entrance of the Holt; but ere they turned the angle of the western wing, Anne exclaimed—

"Is it possible? Look, Amy; my eyes are dazzled with staring at those golden sands, but it seems to me that the great door, the front entrance, is actually open!"

"It certainly is open, and I can see something covered with matting just inside, at the top of the steps. But is there anything so remarkable in a door being open?"

"I never saw it open in my life; the grand entrance and the state rooms have been disused since the Manchester people went away."

"Let us go round to the front, Anne."

"Oh, no; Mrs. Twentyman would not like it, and we do not know who we might meet."

"Who could we meet to care about? The house looks dead, and you know there are only servants in it."

"Only Mrs. Twentyman, a housemaid, and a young girl from the duchess's school; there are men-servants, of course, but they do not live in the Holt."

"Well, then, let us go and see what has come to pass, that they should open the front door; besides, I want to see what that package is, covered with matting."

"We are just at the side-door; here it is."

"Never mind; three minutes or less will take us round to the other. How silly you are, Anne; positively, you country girls are afraid of your own shadows; you must have a season in town, Anne, indeed you must."

Anne smiled, her own peculiar, quiet smile, that Amy never could understand.

"I am not afraid, Amy; but cannot you perceive, if we met any one else."

"Whom should we meet save the servants?"

"No one, I suppose; and yet—Amy, a wilful woman must have her way; let us go then,—at least there will not be a dragon to eat us up."

Amy was not so sure of that, when two minutes afterwards, just as her foot was on the first step of the grand but mouldering portico, a huge beast—it might have been

a veritable dragon come up from the marshes, for all she knew—rushed up the avenue, made a great *bay* at her, and laid her prostrate on the broad and mossy flight. The creature stood over her, as if half-ashamed and half-triumphant; and she was both too terrified and too confused to rise. Anne patted the animal, which was not a dragon, or a griffin, or any mythical thing at all, but a tremendous stag-hound, that would have been a match for most men, and he seemed quite inclined to be friendly with her, but uncertain as regarded his feelings towards Miss Temple. A minute afterwards, and a tall man, dark-complexioned and bearded, as few men were twenty-five years ago, came round the eastern angle of the house, and spoke angrily to the great brute, who was proffering his compliments to one lady, and frightening the other to within a verge of hysteria.

"How dare you, sir? come off, Lyulph! come off, I say!"

Lyulph penitently obeyed; and he slunk into the background, whining a little, and looking piteously at his master, as if to say, "Indeed, sir, it was an accident."

The tall man Anne fancied she had seen before, but she could not be certain when or where. Ere she had time to collect her scattered faculties, he was apologising, in a slightly foreign accent, for the alarm his dog had caused.

Amy was still trembling in every limb; her blue eyes were closed, and there seemed every probability of her fainting, or falling into hysterics. Anne was inexpressibly annoyed, for she felt they were on debateable ground; and her position, as her cousin leaned more heavily upon her arm, became at once painful and embarrassing. How heartily she wished she had not yielded to Amy's solicitations; if she had found her way as usual by the side entrance to Mrs. Twentyman's parlour, this disagreeable encounter would not have happened. But Anne was not

the girl to accept a difficulty and resign herself to it without an effort, and she hastened, therefore, to say, "We also should apologise for our appearance here: we did not know that any one besides the servants was about; we came with a message to Mrs. Twentyman, from Mrs. Musgrave, at the Holt Farm."

The stranger bowed courteously but coldly; and Amy, who expected he would have made some gallant rejoinder about the happy accident which had procured him the pleasure, &c., &c., became so indignant, that the blood came back to her lips, and her eyes opened, and she sat erect, to Anne's unspeakable satisfaction, on the heavy carved oak seat within the hall, to which she had hastily led her. Even Anne, who had as little coquetry in her nature as Lyulph had in his, thought that the stag-hound's master might have been a trifle more affable, more generous; he evidently counted them as intruders, and probably thought them silly, forward girls, who had been indulging in a rude and frivolous curiosity.

Amy stood up, but still trembled in spite of every effort. She was really very weak, and the long walk had tired her; moreover, she was mortally afraid of great dogs; and to be unceremoniously tumbled over, in a strange place, and before a strange gentleman, by a hound large and strong enough to tear a man to pieces, was not likely to conduce to her equanimity. Again the stranger spoke, and again both girls perceived the slight intonation which betrayed either foreign birth or breeding, and perhaps both. "I will call Mrs. Twentyman."

"I will thank you to do so," was Anne's reply; and she spoke as one accustomed to a prompt obedience. Quiet as was her air and tone, there was an indescribable haughtiness in both, that evidently surprised the stranger; for he looked earnestly at the proud young face that met his gaze with a simple dignity he had not expected to encounter in these rustic solitudes.

He disappeared, and then Amy relieved her feelings by saying energetically, "What a Goth!"

"Hush, Amy! I do not like him, but we had no business here; we have only ourselves to thank for this unpleasant adventure."

"What business has *he* here? Who is he?"

"I have no idea; I never saw him before. He does not belong to this neighbourhood."

"Can he have purchased the Holt?"

"It may be so, though I think it is not likely: we should have heard, I fancy, had any such transaction really taken place. James gets all the county news at St. Ulpha's, and at Lunechester market."

"I hope, for your sakes, he is not the master of the Holt. Did you ever see such a barbarian? He is intolerably ugly, as well as savage."

"I could not see what he was like, the light is almost gone. As he came up to the door, I saw that he was very dark, and tall, and had a beard."

"A most atrocious beard! it makes him look as savage as his dreadful dog! I hate beards; adventurers, and *soi-disant* foreign counts, and bad people generally wear them. Hush! some one comes."

It was Mrs. Twentyman, who, full of concern and sympathy, came to beg the young ladies to go at once and rest in her parlour.

Anne was anxious to return home at once, but on Amy's account she concluded to accept the housekeeper's invitation. Tea was on the table, and the bustling old lady had poured out the cups, and placed one in the hand of either guest before she could remonstrate.

"Nonsense, my dear Miss Musgrave," was Mrs. Twentyman's quick reply. "I am not going to let you walk across the Chase, and over the Brow, without a good cup of tea to warm you; and as for poor Miss Amy, she looks as white as the duchess's monument in the church.

I am not sure she could get home till she had refreshed herself; and I have no vehicle to offer you, for the shandry-dan has gone to Farleton station."

"What is it gone there for?" asked Miss Temple, with inexcusable curiosity.

"I really do not know; the *master* ordered it."

"Is that gentleman with the beard and the great hound the master of Canonbury Holt?" it was Anne's turn to inquire. "I had no idea any master was expected. I wish you had let us know, Mrs. Twentyman: we should never have dreamed of coming here at all, if you had told us."

"My dear young lady, I knew no more about anybody being expected than yourself, till last night, when Carrier Walker brought me a letter from Lawyer Best, that I ought to have had the morning before. Lawyer Best, he tells me in this letter, that I am to expect, as to-day, a gentleman who is going to live awhile at Canonbury Holt. I am just to get a bed-room ready, and to air one of the smaller sitting-rooms, and I am to acknowledge the gentleman as the master, and obey him as such. That's all, Miss Musgrave. I don't even know my new master's name; I don't know where he comes from, nor anything about him, but I fancy he is *not* English born."

Amy was all alive now; Mrs. Twentyman's good tea, hot, strong, and sweet, as she knew how to make it, had done its work. Amy Temple had forgotten her skirmish with Lyulph, and her encounter with Lyulph's master, and she was deeply interested in the housekeeper's narrative. She inquired next, "But surely you do know *his name?*"

"Indeed I do not, Miss Amy. There was no name on the luggage; the baggage he did not bring with him—and there was plenty of it—was just addressed 'The Master of Canonbury Holt, Chalfonts, near Farleton Station, Fellshire, England.' Now did you ever?"

"But Chalfonts is miles from Farleton?"

"Yes, but it is the nearest railway-station; they *are* talking about a line from Keirmouth to St. Ulpha's beyond, but bless me, the world will come to an end before that comes to pass. Miss Musgrave, fancy a line of railroad across those marshes, and worse still, across the channel where the quicksands are!"

"They are surveying for it, however," said Miss Musgrave, "and it will be a great accommodation; it is very inconvenient to have to send to Keirmouth or to Farleton so constantly."

Mrs. Twentyman shook her head. "Ah, Miss Musgrave, you are young and sanguine, but I don't like these dreadful changes; I think railroads are shocking presumptuous things, a sort of tempting of Providence. Please the Lord, I'll never mock Him by travelling on one, not if there's a station at the bottom of the Pine Walk."

"How old is the master?" asked Miss Temple, presently.

"That I cannot tell you; he may be thirty or forty, or even more, with that bronzed skin and that outlandish beard. He just gave his orders, like a general on the eve of battle, when he came this morning, and he spoke stern and low, and very short. I have not heard his voice since till he came to bid me attend on you. I should say he does not like to speak."

"Did he come alone?"

"No, he brought a servant—*such* a character! *He* can't speak one word of English. He only gibbers at you and shakes his head and laughs, and shows a row of teeth like ivories. I asked the master about a room for this—this, he's not a Christian I am sure, by his colour and rolling eyes, nor yet a negro; and he said, 'Swingle swairy,' or some such name, 'would lie on the mat outside his door.' Fancy! and this a Christian country. And the great brute of a dog; *did* you see his fangs and his claws, Miss Amy?

—it is a mercy he did not make a dinner of you!—he is to sleep along with the master—leastways, in his chamber."

This was all that Mrs. Twentyman could tell; and presently the under-gardener appeared, lantern in hand, for it was now dark, to escort the two young ladies to the farm.

CHAPTER IV.

AT THE FARM.

THEY were crossing the fold-yard to go in by the back-door, and Anne was directing the Holt servant to go into the kitchen for a draught of ale, when from one of the out-buildings came forth a stalwart figure, more than six feet high, and proportionately robust; a young man, with a ruddy complexion, with blue eyes, brimming over with fun, and irrepressible good temper, and with chesnut brown curly hair and whiskers. He was not fashionably attired, his velveteen shooting-jacket did not fit, his boots were better calculated for the marshes than for Regent Street; he wore great awkward stick-up collars, and his neck-tie was fastened in a huge limp bow beneath his chin. As for gloves, he never patronised them, save on Sundays, and on special occasions, and his hands, though well-shaped, and of symmetrical size, were of a colour that astonished even Bertie, when, on the evening of her arrival, one of them first clasped her own.

I need hardly say that this young man, who emerged from the cow-shed, was the "Cousin James" concerning whom Mrs. Temple had sounded her little note of alarm, and the master of the Holt Farm. He made three mighty strides across the litter of the yard to the place where the

two girls stood, crying out, as he came, in a voice that proved the soundness of his lungs: "Well, young ladies, we began to think you were lost, only Anne could find her way across the marshes in the dark; she knows every turning, and every bit of solid ground! I suppose you have been having tea and scandal with Mrs. Twentyman?

"Tea, but no scandal," was Anne's answer.

"Well, I do not think there will ever be much scandal talked where you are, Anne! I did not miss you, for I have not been into the house to tea, but mother and Bertie came out a while since, and said you had not returned. I say, Anne, I am afraid it is all up with poor Sally!"

"Oh, James! and I did not know she was ill."

"I did not know till three o'clock this afternoon; I was going off to see old Micklethwaite about the barley, when Jock asked me to come in and look at her. She is going the same way as Jetty, poor beast."

"You have sent for Transome?"

"Yes! he came at once; but he said she was past praying for; nothing could save her!"

"Let me go and see her, James! she will know me; dear old Sally!"

"Who are you talking about?" inquired Amy; "who is it you call poor beast? Is Sally one of the servants?"

"No; only a cow."

"I really thought it was a human creature; Anne said *she* would know her!"

"And Sally will know her," replied James: "till you are accustomed to animals you have no idea how grateful and intelligent they can be! They vary in disposition of course, as human creatures do; but Sally has always been a great pet, and she is wonderfully affectionate. Come, Anne! Bertie and my mother are in there!"

"Bertie in that shed!—with the cows!" exclaimed Amy, with half-a-dozen notes of exclamation in her tone.

"With one cow only—come and look!"

Curiosity—one of Amy's little weaknesses—prevailed over her horror of horns and cow-houses; and she daintily folded her tweed cloak about her, so as to shield herself from all defilement, and tripped lightly after Anne and her cousin, wondering meanwhile what her mamma would say, and what certain intimate friends of hers would say, could they behold her picking her way among heaps of farm litter, or what seemed so to her, towards a veritable cow-shed, where an elderly vaccine quadruped lay expiring. She looked in timidly, half expecting to be tossed upon the spot, and lo! the cow-shed was quite an ornamental building. It was lofty, and queer carvings decorated the beams over-head, and in the south wall were the remains of a built-up Norman arch. Close under the mouldering and defaced tracery, with her dress tucked up, was Bertie, stooping over the moaning cow, and stroking her neck as gently as if the sufferer were a fellow creature; near her stood Mrs. Musgrave and Transome, the veterinary surgeon, and two farm servants had just risen to their feet, and concluded to let poor Sally die in peace.

"It's of no use, maister," said Jock, ruefully; "her must die; there ain't no more to be done; better let her be."

"What is her complaint?" asked Amy, keeping however at a safe distance from hoofs and horns.

"Pleuro-pneumonia."

"Is that the same as pleurisy?"

"Not exactly, Miss Temple;" and Mr. Transome would have explained the precise difference between the terms, had not Bertie made a sudden diversion by exclaiming—"James! why don't you try homœopathy?"

Mr. Transome laughed. "As well try old Dolly Walker's charms! If *my* treatment won't save her, and it *won't*, those silly little globules will do her no good. A mere chip in porridge is homœopathy, miss; it can do no

harm, except it's persevered in by deluded individuals when proper remedies are urgently required. If you were to put a pound of arsenic into the channel at Earnseat, and then come along to Cockleham, five good miles, and take a teaspoonful of the water out, and drink it,—it would do you just as much good and just as much harm as this new-fangled *homœopathy!*"

Bertie disdained a reply; but she turned to her cousin: "James! if the old system can do nothing, it would not matter if the new one failed. I wish you would let me try."

"Let *you* try! Why, Bertie, you would not drench her?"

"She will not need drenching; you and your satellites have persecuted the poor animal sufficiently. Cousin James, you have lived in these solitudes till you are steeped in ignorance, or you would know that we homœopathists neither drench children, nor dumb creatures,—nor ourselves. Ah me! I feel nausea now, when I think of the rhubarb and magnesia administrations of my nursery-days."

"But what *are* we to do, Bertie?"

"Come into the house with me; come you too, Anne, and we will consult the big book I bought before I left town; it has an appendix on the treatment of cattle diseases."

"As my services are no longer needed, I will bid you a good evening," said Mr. Transome, stiffly. "We shall see how a lady-practitioner succeeds."

"We shall see," replied Bertie, sharply; "only please to remember, sir, that you have quite given her up; therefore, if she recover, I shall take all the credit to myself."

"And *if* she recovers, miss, far be it from me to take one iota of the credit; but she won't, she can't! she'll breathe her last before morning, as sure as she's a cow! If she's alive at noon to-morrow, I'll eat her, hoofs and all."

"I will not hold you to your promise," returned Bertie, laughingly; the man amused her so much that she forgot the little pique called forth by his disrespectful manner. Then, taking Anne's arm, she moved off to the house, followed by Amy, who thought James might have offered to escort her across the yard. He stayed, however, to speak to his mother, and to give some directions to the men; and Anne and Bertie were deep in the pages of the "big book" before James made his appearance in the parlour. It was soon discovered that *arsenicum* was, in this case, the medicine first to be administered; and Bertie fetched out her little chest, remarking that she would have brought proper cattle-medicines with her, had she only thought of it, but, as it was, they must make the best of what was attainable. Then she, and Anne, and James, went off again to the mediæval cow-house, and Amy lay on the sofa, really tired out, and lost in two trains of thought, which perseveringly crossed each other—the one being, what mamma would say to Bertie could she behold her doctoring a sick cow, and talking as familiarly to James Musgrave as though she had known him all her life; the other being, of course, her strange encounter with the mysterious master of the Holt.

"Aunt Hannah," she said, presently, "did you know that some one was come to live at Canonbury Holt?"

Aunt Hannah took off her spectacles, which showed that she was as much surprised as her niece intended her to be. "My dear, what do you mean?"

"Just what I say, aunt: I know the fact, and that is all;" and then she recounted her adventure with Lyulph, and his foreign-looking owner, who was described by Miss Temple in most unflattering terms; and she concluded by saying:—"Indeed, of the two, I think I prefer the dog, though you could not look at either without a *wehr-wolf* sensation coming over you. Ah! here they are

coming back; I suppose the patient has had her dose: Anne will tell you what a savage this man is."

Meanwhile, Anne had been giving James and Bertie an account of their unlucky escapade; and all being done for Sally that could be done at present, they were quite willing to sit down, and discuss the stranger. "Have you heard nothing of an anticipated arrival at the Holt?" asked Anne. "You were at Ribbletown last week, and I think you said you saw Mr. Best?"

"I did! I had some business with him; but not a word did he breathe about the Holt being let or sold. It is very singular, but it does not matter to us."

"Only," said Anne, "we should like to have an agreeable neighbour; and some of our land is leased from the Holt. But, perhaps, he is only here temporarily; perhaps he is renting the house for a little while. The strangest thing is, that I fancy I have seen him before."'

"Amy says he is frightfully ugly," remarked Mrs. Musgrave.

"I am not sure about his ugliness, but I only saw him for a moment, as he stood upon the threshold; it was too dark inside the hall to see anything or any one clearly. But he is very tall and finely made, he carries himself proudly, he has a very dark complexion, and such a beard! His accent is only slightly foreign, but there is something offensively haughty and imperious in his tone, as well as in his manner; I never felt myself more entirely at disadvantage."

"It was a great pity you went round to the front entrance," said Mrs. Musgrave.

"How could we imagine that we should meet an ogre?" replied Amy, peevishly. "Anne has been going to the Holt all her life, and seeing no one but the housekeeper and the servants. If people choose to keep up mysteries, they must expect to find themselves intruded on

occasionally. I hate anything mysterious; it makes me speculate till I am tired and stupid, in spite of myself."

"And I love mysteries!" cried Bertie, her cheeks glowing, and her bright eyes sparkling; "you only wanted a bit of romance among you to make this beautiful Chalfonts valley a veritable paradise! And lo! the hero has arrived, and nobody knows who he is, which is gloriously *en regle*. And here we are, ready to live out the three-volume novel that is coming to us; but who will be the heroine? What is a story without a heroine?"

"You shall be the heroine yourself, if you like," said Anne, merrily; "I willingly surrender to you all pretensions that may be accorded to me, as first in the field, and also as resident in the neighbourhood. Amy is so disgusted, that she will be contented to walk in and out of the chapters of the tale, as a mere lay figure."

But Amy did not seem quite contented; with all her languid indifference of look and tone, and her quiet enjoyment of the *dolce far niente*, she preferred always to be first in the estimation of those about her. Miss Temple had no idea of being a mere chorus-singer, she must be *prima-donna*, or she would not appear at all in the opera that might possibly be performed at Chalfonts. No! she was not contented to occupy the subordinate position Anne playfully assigned to her, and, though she uttered no word of dissatisfaction, there was a cloud on her fair brow that made her aunt and sister fear she was fatigued to real indisposition. Bertie offered her globules, which, of course, were rejected. Mrs. Musgrave thought a basin of gruel—her own universal panacea—would be excellent; but Amy had a decided aversion to "slops," and it was Anne, at last, who thought of suitable refreshments—thin strips of delicately-toasted bread, and hot wine-whey, which Bertie declared, merited to be in the category of slops equally with gruel and mutton-broth.

So Amy Temple trifled with her supper, and consumed about one-third of it, wishing all the time she could have some oysters, or sole-fillets, or a lobster-cutlet; while Bertie and Anne, secure in a perfect digestion, regaled themselves on damson-tart and rich cream, and James ate cold beef, and bread and cheese and celery, with an appetite that made Miss Temple shudder.

"What a lout he was to call cousin!" she said to herself, as she stirred the contents of her basin, and sipped and stirred again, in her cosy corner, by the fire, "looking just like any common farmer, being indeed nothing better, except by birth; wearing hideous clothes, studying stupid books about soils and sub-soils, and drainage and irrigation, and chemical manures; never paying a compliment, scarcely rendering the common attentions due to guests from the master of the house, and, worst of all, having queer religious notions! Aunt Hannah! well! she must have been handsome in her youth, and she had a well-bred air about her; in spite of her half-civilised surroundings, and her long seclusions. Miss Temple was not totally lost in Mrs. Musgrave; for Amy suddenly remembered, in the midst of her criticisms, that once upon a time her aunt really *was* Miss Temple, and was still her father's well-beloved sister. Yes, Aunt Hannah might pass, and Anne might pass, in spite of many gaucheries; but James could never be tolerated within the pale of 'society,' and, indeed, would be helplessly out of his element in any position above that which he occupied, seemingly, to his own intense satisfaction—whatever else Cousin James was not, he was undeniably happy, and quite contented with his lot!"

So Amy mused, while the other four were gathered round the supper-table, chatting pleasantly, as was their wont, for Anne and her mother had read extensively, and thought as well, and they knew all the history and legends of their own north country, and were tolerably "well-up"

in its botany and geology. James, too, was interested in things unconnected with his farming duties—he liked politics, and read the newspapers eagerly, even after he had ascertained the state of the markets; he had also a scientific bent, and a natural genius for mechanics, yet it was his great pleasure now and then to devote an hour to the well-beloved classical studies of his youth. Anne had always been his friend, as well as his sister, and her feminine influences had tended to refine and soften a nature that might otherwise have been too rugged, too unyielding, too reliant on its own inbred resources. James, too, had helped to form Anne's character; his habit of deep thought, his calm, unbiassed judgment, his quiet way of working out a question, his principle of examining a truth on every side, rejecting, as conclusive, a front view only, had had their weight with his sister's more enthusiastic temperament, and with her more illogical modes of reasoning, as might have been expected. And it is thus in the relationships of brother and sister, as well as in that closer tie which death only can dissolve, that the stronger and wider and more mathematical mind of the man should blend with the finer and more susceptible characteristics of the woman, the two thus forming one harmonious whole.

They were a happy quartette that evening assembled round the supper-table, only Amy felt out of her element, unappreciated, uncared for, and lonely; she wished herself back at Kensington, and sighed for her mother's congenial companionship. Mrs. Temple's languid, passive ways exactly suited her eldest daughter; and the two, when annoyed by papa and Bertie working off their superfluous energy, had often decided between themselves that "there really was nothing on earth worth making a fuss about." But, though Mrs. Temple never roused herself to make a resolute stand against anything of which she did not approve—whether it were some objectionable

arrangement entered into by her husband, who, like most literary men, was a trifle inconsiderate at times; or some startling move of Bertie's, or the disgraceful conduct of her servants, whose incessant shortcomings and habitual peculations were the staple theme of her conversation—Amy could, and did "make a fuss" upon occasion, and she could make those about her extremely uncomfortable, if only she once resolved to take the trouble.

She was half inclined that night to give the Musgraves and her sister a little lesson, so many were the petty grievances that had fallen to her share that day. Anne had tired her out by walking as if for a wager; then she had taken her to that dreary, ruinous Holt, where man and dog had combined to be offensive; she had come home to find Bertie absolutely in the cow-house, and, still worse, to find herself overlooked in the excitement produced by Sally's illness. But, though the tears rose again and again into her eyes, and though her throat ached with hysterical emotion, she could not decide upon "giving way," as Bertie unfeelingly called it, because she felt intuitively that Mrs. Musgrave would not treat a nervous attack in the style recognised at Kensington as orthodox, and that the whole atmosphere of the Holt Farm was opposed to hysteria.

So the merry party talked on, unconscious of Amy's censure, now and then referring to her on some point or other, but receiving short and languid answers, as if the effort to speak were really painful. At last Mrs. Musgrave proposed her going to bed, and Amy was only too glad to accede, and she went at once, accompanied by Bertie, who always officiated as her sister's maid. But Bertie, having seen Amy's head reposing on the pillows, came down again to see how Sally fared, and the last bulletin, issued a little before midnight, announced a decided improvement in the interesting patient. Another dose of homœopathic medicine was administered; and, as

it was required to be repeated during the night, James declared his intention of sitting up with her, while Jock and the herd-boy were permitted to go to bed.

CHAPTER V.

AT THE HOLT.

THE newly-arrived master of Canonbury Holt sat gloomily in the wide dreary chamber that had been prepared for him. He sat gazing moodily into the ashes of the wood fire, which was still glowing upon the hearth, and every now and then, as the evening breeze came sweeping round the corners of the desolate old house, and wailing along its dark passages, and whistling through key-holes, and sighing and sobbing among the trees without, he shivered and stirred the fire impatiently, and cast mournful glances on the dark panelled walls, and on the tall plumed bed, that in the fitful shadowy firelight might have been taken for an antiquated hearse.

The room bore traces of long desertion, and, in truth, many a year had elapsed since any one had passed a night in it; it had been hastily and of course cursorily set in order by Mrs. Twentyman, on the receipt of Lawyer Best's delayed letter; this very room, the "Abbot's Chamber," as it had been called time out of mind, being specially named, as that which she was to convert into a habitable apartment for the benefit of the new master. But all her skill had failed to make the Abbot's Chamber even tolerably comfortable;—certainly the bedding was properly aired, for that she had attended to herself; but no shaking or folding could give the tattered colourless drapery of the funereal couch an air of decency; no rubbing could polish

the huge dark cabinets, or the darker panels of the wainscot, dim and blackened by long years of damp and neglect; the large oriel windows were uncurtained; the toilet apparatus had been brought from the housekeeper's own quarters; pieces of carpet had been laid down here and there, more with a view to comfort than to appearances, and finally, the wind blew down the wide chimney, and occasionally scattered the ashes on the hearth.

The man who sat musing by that desolate fireside was altogether in keeping with the scene around him. He also appeared to belong to the past rather than to the present; there might have been a certain brightness and stateliness about him once, but now, looking into his face, as it gazed intently on the glowing embers, you saw that it was sunken, world-worn, and weary; you saw a whole life's history written there,—but written in cipher, the key to which you probably would never find. That stern sad face would have been pale had it not been bronzed in the land of the palm and the desert; it was handsome still, for every feature was perfect; the eyes were dark, like unfathomable lakes in deepest shadow, and even a careless observer might have remarked that every now and then they flashed with a strange wild light, that told of secret smouldering fires within—fires kindled long ago no doubt, fires dying down at times to the last spark, and smothered up with the ashes of lost hopes and dreary memories, but still unextinguished, still faintly burning on, waiting for the day when some strange fate should fan them once more to a blaze, or perchance for that other day, coming to us all, whan they should be quenched for ever in the silence of the grave. It was a face to make you think of some solitary island-volcano, rising up solemnly, in its arid, rocky grandeur, from the waves that beat eternally about it; its lava-fires, deep down within its cold bare bosom, slumbering, but not extinct. Ages may have rolled since the burning tide swept down the mountain gorge to

.at ebbs and flows for ever at its
·ıy come when the pent-up element
.in, and crimson sea and skies with

··

'e is very sorrowful; for the brightness
·st, and it fades into a blacker night
.nd the streams so long restrained, that
.nd so swiftly from their source, kill all
leave behind them only death and utter

passed on, and from time to time the lonely
rom his reverie, and heaped fuel on the dying
to relapse again into deeper thought, when the
·at burned up, and flashed out their warmth and
over the wide, sombre room. Lyulph looked up
then as if he were keeping tryst, and were very
.t, but he knew his place too well to think of dis-
his master's meditations; only when there was any
·ent, he rose and stretched his legs, and quietly
the hand, that gave one mute caress, but not a word
·wer to the wistful glance, and the scarce-heard sup-
.ting whine, that seemed to ask for some interlude in
monotony of the dreary watch they two were keeping.
it was not the first long mournful watch, by many, that
ıster and hound had kept alone together. That grave,
d man and Lyulph were tried friends and true, and, like
ll true friends,—alas! how rare are such!—they could
ırust each other's silence, equally with each other's speech.
At last the master roused himself, and stood up on the
hearth, and then Lyulph thought the time was come to
make der- His master evidently thought so
to- indly, and then began to talk to
h tions were of regular occurrence.
old boy? Are you weary already
val grandeur? You and I have
ıry lands, and travelled many a

weary mile, Lyulph; but anything more depressing than this Canonbury Holt we have never seen before. And yet, Lyulph, perhaps we shall come to like it when we know it better;—you and I may find grand sport in those wild woods, on those eerie-looking mosses, and those goblin-haunted marshes, and on those treacherous sands, where perhaps we, or at least I, may find a sudden grave some day, when I least am looking for it. I wonder if you would desert me, old fellow, if I were struggling for dear life, in a quicksand, or surrounded by the tide,—for life, however unpleasant it may be, and however tiresomely prolonged, acquires an infinite value the moment it seems on the point of being snatched away. I wonder whether you would swim ashore and leave me to go down to Hades, *alias* the slimy bed of that smiling estuary we saw to-day, or whether you would linger by my side, and die with me, true to the last, you poor foolish brute, true as no human creature has ever been to me!

"Truth? is there such a thing beneath the sun, or, for the matter of that, beyond the sun either? Is there such a thing as *truth* in all the universe? At any rate, I have never found it, and never shall now, I suppose; I am getting old, Lyulph, old and weary and miserable, and I wonder what I was born for? What is my life for?—where did it come from, and where is it going to? There's a problem for you, my good hound:—nay! don't look at me with such great wistful eyes; a cursed priest or parson, or a smooth-faced, false-hearted woman would look just so, if I asked either to solve the problem that is puzzling me for the hundred-and-fiftieth time to-night—the problem of my own existence!

"And that reminds me, Lyulph, to remind you of your ungallant conduct to-day. We don't like women, you and I, do we? We have tried them and found them—bah! we won't say what we found them, Lyulph, we will only keep clear of them—if we could we would go to a land where

no women are; but, as we cannot, we will simply avoid their society—we will not be rude to them if we can help it, but certainly we will not knock them down,—a brave man and a noble stag-hound should scorn such an action, Lyulph, my friend! Still I will not scold you for tumbling over that silly little simpleton this afternoon, only it must not occur again, you understand! What a foolish little creature! it seemed to be lying under your paws, like a year-old baby, who when it falls down has no idea of getting up again, but must be picked up, and soothed and petted, and condoled with, till it chooses to leave off crying. *Per Bacco*, Lyulph! babies are horrible things, nearly as objectionable as women, and closely connected with them.

"But, of all kinds of woman, I hate the little ones,—the fairy, sylph-like sort, with yellow hair and azure eyes, and you seem to share my prejudice, good hound; you would have fraternised with that other girl, if I am not much mistaken, and truly there was something rather agreeable in her outline, as I saw her in the dusk—a fine figure, and the manners of a lady of the land: bah, what have we to do with fine figures, Lyulph? It is all one to us, whether the women that unavoidably come in our way are like water-butts, or hour-glasses, whether they are goddesses or kitchen-wenches, whether they helplessly tumble down and can't get up again, or whether they walk the earth *en princesse*, and trample under *their* dainty feet all the fools and all the luckless ones of our sex; only, I wonder who that girl with the haughty voice could be; but you want your supper, Lyulph, and so do I—let us summons Swingleswairy."

Swingleswairy—who was certainly gifted with ubiquity, inasmuch as he was always close at hand whenever his master wanted him, and yet never neglected any duty indoors or out—appeared the moment he was called, and the master called him exactly as he would have called

Lyulph, namely, by applying his lips to a small, richly-chased dog-whistle, set with precious stones,—only where Swingleswairy was concerned, the whistle was sounded twice, in a peculiar key, and Lyulph, who always obeyed the single long shrill call, knew that it was not for him.

It was a singularly apparelled, olive-complexioned man, who stood before the master of the Holt, and, with hands clasped and head declined, waited silently for orders. They were given in a language that no one at Canonbury Holt, no one at Chalfonts, no one in all Fellshire, probably could comprehend; but Lyulph seemed to understand what was said equally with Swingleswairy. The last few words we will translate.

"You must learn to speak English, Swingleswairy, or else I must find some one else to fill your place; I cannot be eternally giving orders to country servants. Go now and fetch the housekeeper—she seems a tolerably sensible person." In five minutes the Hindoo returned, ushering in Mrs. Twentyman, who looked nervous and ill at ease; she had been communicated with chiefly by signs, and she was by no means sure of what was required of her, and the more she thought about this mysterious foreigner, who had suddenly come to claim her services, the more she distrusted him, the more she shrank from him, and associated him in her own mind with a certain awful personage who shall be nameless.

"Mrs. Twentyman, I want some supper," said the master, stopping in his perambulations up and down the long, dim room, and when he stopped his four-footed friend stopped also.

"Yes, sir! Will you please to go into the oak-parlour, where the table is laid?"

"No! bring me some bread here, some of your oat-cakes if you will, and a drinking-glass, and some cold meat for Lyulph."

"What kind of cold meat, sir?"

"Any kind that you happen to have, Lyulph is not particular;—there will be cold fowl or cold mutton."

"Plenty of cold roast mutton, sir, the best part of as fine a leg as ever I cooked—but—"

"But what?—make haste!"

"It is too good for a dog, sir!"

"That is my affair; if I choose that my dog should live as well as myself, what is that to you or to any one?"

"Nothing, certainly, sir."

"Then in future you had better refrain from questioning any of my commands. I require from my servants *obedience*, not arguments, however respectfully put forth: if I desire you to serve me with hay and chopped straw, and my horse with cutlets and tomato sauce, I shall expect no word of remonstrance, but prompt obedience."

Mrs. Twentyman curtsied and disappeared, glad to get away from a presence that terrified her more and more. In a few minutes Lyulph was served with half-a-dozen of the best slices out of the cold leg of mutton; the master poured out from a curious long-necked bottle which Swingleswairy brought him, about half-a-glassful of a sparkling ruby-coloured liquid, that might have been either wine or *liqueur*, then he filled it up with water, and that, with a goodly portion of oat-cake, made up his supper. After awhile, when the house seemed quite still, the master inquired of Swingleswairy whether all the servants were gone to bed, and receiving an affirmative answer, he desired that functionary to remain in the Abbot's Chamber, and keep up the fire till he and Lyulph should return.

Swingleswairy bowed acquiescence: of course he never dreamed of inquiring where the master could be going at that dead time of night, and in a strange country, too, though an English servant would have been sorely tempted to make some observation, seeing that it was near upon

the stroke of twelve, and the nature of the ground about the house difficult, if not actually perilous, to one unacquainted with it. But if his master had said to him—"Swingleswairy, I am going to heaven, or to the other place; wait here till Lyulph and I come back," his demeanour would have been equally deferential and impassive. Swingleswairy was a model servant, and his master knew his value, only he must learn to speak English, in order to be able to communicate with the other servants, and with the tradespeople, with whom they might possibly be brought in contact.

So Lyulph and his master set forth. The wind, that had risen probably with the incoming of the tide, had lulled again, though still it moaned softly among the trees of the Chase, and strange voices seemed to be whispering and floating through the long galleries, and in the dusty, echoing rooms through which this strange pair took their way. They came at last to the picture-gallery, where a long line of Thurstons, and of the Priors and Abbots who preceded them at the Holt, frowned down upon that melancholy dark-haired man, and the fierce staghound who stopped when he stopped, and went on when he went on, and gazed earnestly at whatever he gazed at. It needed nerves of iron—or, perhaps, what is still more to the point, *a faultless digestion*—to be roaming through those deserted chambers at that solemn hour, without apprehensions of some ghostly presence. It might also be urged that a good conscience would be of service in such circumstances, but the master of Canonbury Holt had declared that conscience was a myth, created by priests to frighten babes and silly women,—for himself, he followed his own will and did whatever he chose to do, and left undone whatever he chose to leave undone, untrammelled by any scruples of his conscience! Such, at least, had been his boast in other days and in other lands, where lawlessness might have its way, provided it were strong enough and rich

enough to beat down opposition or to purchase silence, where silence was convenient.

"And that is Raymond Thurston," he muttered to himself, as at length he stood before a certain portrait of a dark-complexioned, melancholy-visaged man, a mere youth in years, yet with a brow heavy with a weight of grief and secret care. The pictured face, though sad almost to sternness, and faded in its colouring, had a certain beauty of its own; the features were delicate, the nostrils and upper lip especially were finely cut, the eyes, though mournful, were dark as night, and soft, and lustrous, and looked out from the canvas with a strange, pathetic gaze upon the solitary man who contemplated them so fixedly, and with an expression that Lyulph seemed trying in vain to understand.

But, if any one with human perception had been there, he would have seen that the living face and the portrait were very much alike; that, as the master continued to look into the deep, soft orbs wrought out so long ago by the painter's skilful pencil, the resemblance grew and grew, till the one face seemed almost the reflex of the other, with this difference—Raymond Thurston wore over burdened brow and faded feature a tenderness and sweetness that you looked for vainly in the bronzed visage of the actual living man; there was the same worn, world-weary expression on both the faces, but the peace that lighted the sad pictured eyes had never shone in the stern, houghty gaze of Lyulph's master; the beard, too, gave another aspect to the chin and mouth,—perhaps it altogether altered, or at least concealed, the outlines of both, for who can trace the moulding of the chin, or the curving of the lip, when both are covered with masses of dark hair? Still, had Ann Musgrave been there, or had Mrs. Twentyman stolen in upon the master's midnight meditations, either of them would have said at once of the mysterious stranger, "He is a Thurston! one of the old

family has come to Canonbury Holt!" And, falling upon such a discovery, Mrs. Twentyman would have been ready to make a thousand allowances for the imperious tone and uncanny ways that had so thoroughly displeased and frightened her.

At length the master turned away from the portrait he had examined so critically, but he looked at no more pictures, and he and Lyulph went on to the end of the long gallery, where they found a small door that would have been passed unnoticed by scores of people, since, save for a keyhole almost hidden by the scroll-work of the next panel, there was nothing to distinguish it from the other panels, which were all precisely similar. But, if the master had been born in Canonbury Holt, and had lived in it all his life, he could not have appeared more cognisant of its geography. He took a key from his waistcoat-pocket and fitted it to the lock, at first, as it seemed, without success; but, putting down the candle and applying himself more carefully to the operation, the rusty wards gave way, the concealed hinges sent forth a grating noise, and the door was open. Through it passed, in single file, Lyulph and his master, the hound going first and looking warily before him, for this doorway and the passage to which it led were both extremely narrow, and were doubtless contrived in the thickness of the wall. But the passage, if narrow, was short enough, and it led to no mysterious recess, or legendary chamber; it opened into a gallery that formed part of the ancient, long-disused private chapel of the Thurstons,—a small, and still beautiful edifice,—coeval with the earlier portions of the building, and fast falling into decay.

The master did not linger long to contemplate the tattered banners and the faded escutcheons of his race,—if, indeed, he were a Thurston; there was something in the place that chilled the very marrow in his bones, and made Lyulph whine and look piteously for means of

egress: weeds were springing up in the broken pavement, the roof was so dilapidated that by day the sky could be discerned through its innumerable chinks and crevices, and the night-breeze blew coldly through the aisles, and rustled the shreds of banners that hung above the tomb of one Everard de Courcy, a warrior-brother of the Abbot of Bekanks-Gill, who had died and been buried at Canonbury Holt in the fourteenth century. The Thurstons had restored the ancient tomb, and renewed the knightly banners, but now, weather-beaten and uncared for, mouldings, effigy, and banners seemed alike in the last days of their existence. The master was a man who knew little of mortal tremors and ghostly fears, he had no superstition in his nature, or he had not been there in that lonely aisle, in that dead hour, with only Lyulph for his companion, and the dust of centuries past beneath his feet. But, brave or callous as he was, his heart quailed when a clock suddenly struck *one*. The chill damps made him shiver, and Lyulph looked up imploringly, as if he did not care to tarry longer in that melancholy place.

His master patted his head, and said:—"Come along, old fellow! we have had enough of this; let us look at the stars, and then we'll go to bed."

And, in another minute, they were outside the chapel and on the green sward, and they heard the moan of the receding tide, and felt the west wind blowing soft and freshly on their faces. It was an agreeable change after the ghostly picture gallery and the half-ruined sanctuary, and master and hound walked along the terrace to recover the spirits. Far away out at sea were several lights; but nearer at hand, though still at some distance, burned a solitary flame, showing that some one else was watching in the neighbourhood of Canonbury. That some one else was James Musgrave, engaged in the unromantic occupation of tending his sick cow. The master watched the light for a while, gave one glance across the bay, another

towards the dark fells rising up behind the peaceful little town, and then proceeded to make good his promise to Lyulph. They went in by the usual side entrance, returned to the Abbot's Chamber, and went to bed, the hound at his master's feet, the Hindoo coiled up in a blanket at his master's door.

CHAPTER VI.

SUNDAY MORNING.

"We shall see him on Sunday," said Mrs. Drewitt, the landlady of the "Thurston Arms;" "the curtains of the Holt pew were taken away six years ago, because they fell into ribbons with old age, so we shall get a good view of him from our seat."

"Yes!" said Mr. Crake, the parish clerk, a cooper by trade, and celebrated over the Chalfonts county for his wonderful book learning and antiquarian lore; "Yes! and I've fettled up t' pew; I've had it scoured quite clean, and every nook and cranny of it dusted, but t' cushions are sair rotten, and t' carpet's clean gone, and as for t' hassocks, you might as well kneel upon a puff-ball as upon them. T' books are mostly those as those Clegson people left behind them; but there's one or two dropping to pieces, as have been 'awsome grand lang syne, all purple and gold, and one as big as the reading-desk Bible, with t' Thurston arms and crest all blazoned, as they ca' it, on the cover! And I've pit him *that*, Mrs. Drewitt, and I'm thinking I'll ask his reverence if I may'nt take one of t' hassocks out of t' rectory pew for the new squire to say his prayers upon!"

"I suppose, my dear, you will see your new parish-

ioner to-morrow," said Mrs. Redmayne to her husband, when he emerged from his study on Saturday evening, and seemed quite inclined to chatter over his home-made crumpets and his cup of tea.

"I should think so, my love! of course. Another lump of sugar, please, and less cream next time. Yes! it will be a grand thing to have the Holt inhabited again. I hope he has a taste for church architecture, and will take kindly to the proposed restorations. We must call next week, my dear; at least, I must. I thought of calling about Tuesday."

"I shall accompany you, certainly; your call might be taken as only pastoral. If I go with you, of course he must return the visit, and he will understand that we shall be glad to see him at the rectory. It is rather awkward, though, calling upon a man whose name we do not know."

"I dare say we shall find it out by Tuesday, and, if we do not, we can ask if the master is at home; and I shall say at once, when I have introduced myself and you, 'I have the pleasure of speaking to Mr. —— ?' and he must, as a matter of mere courtesy, fill up the blank immediately."

"I wish the girls were at home."

"What have they to do with the matter? We should not take them with us."

"Really, doctor, you are very short-sighted! I wish there were such things as spectacles for defects in mental vision."

"What now, my dear? what is it? I cannot see."

"You have no business to be a father," retorted Mrs. Redmayne, indignantly. "You never ought to have had any daughters."

The doctor looked amazed, for he thought, and justly too, that he fulfilled his paternal duties to admiration; indeed he was, as all Chalfonts knew, a most indulgent

parent. The implied accusation totally confounded him. "My dear," he said, anxiously, "I cannot comprehend; wherein do I fail? I am sure I never refuse my daughters anything."

"But you would keep them girls for ever."

"And if I would, it could not be; they will grow older, in spite of my desire to keep them little girls, whom I may still pet and play with, and occasionally nurse. Well, I suppose those days are over, my youngest daughter being eighteen. I must look forward to nursing my grandchildren. But you have not told me yet, my dear, why you wish the girls were at home now, instead of at Levensdale."

"Should you not like Clara to settle near us?"

"Marry some one in this neighbourhood, you mean. Of course I should; but there is no one for her to marry, unless it be Dr. Wilson, who is nearly as old as I am, or James Musgrave at the farm."

"Or the new master of the Holt."

"My dear wife!" and Dr. Redmayne set down his tea-cup and spoke seriously; "put all such foolish schemes out of your head; nothing would grieve me more than to have it said that my girls had a match-making mother. Annie is comfortably married, thank God! and without any intervention of yours or mine; the other two, I dare say, will follow their sister's example some day, and I care not how distant that day may be, for our pretty Clara and our wise Jessie are the sunshine of our home. As for this stranger who has come among us so unexpectedly, whose name we do not even know, I beseech you build no castles in the air respecting him. He may be a married man, for aught we know, with half-a-dozen children."

"If he were married he would have his wife with him at the Holt."

"That does not follow; but, married or single, Flora, I will not have his name connected with my girls; and I

desire that the subject may never be mentioned again, not even between ourselves. Don't look vexed and hurt, my dear; I am sorry to have to speak so decidedly, but, indeed, I cannot have these speculations entertained. If our dear children are sought by good and honourable men whom they themselves approve, I shall be willing to part with them; if not, I shall be very happy to keep them, one or both, to be the joy and comfort of our declining years."

Mrs. Redmayne cried a little, as was natural perhaps, and then promised solemnly never to defile her hands or her heart with the vulgar, and generally unprofitable, occupation of match-making, and so the conversation ended. She retired to her sanctum, to sort the new primers the carrier had just brought from Lunechester for the Duchess' school, and the doctor went back to his study to put the finishing touches to his next day's sermons.

Sunday morning came, grey, and calm, and mild, with golden gleams shining now and then aslant the hills, and the wide waste of sand, and creek, and salt marsh; such a morning as November, in his gentler mood, often gives us; and the spirit of peace and rest seemed brooding over the quiet valley of Chalfonts. Not a sound save the redbreast's song, the tide's low murmur, and the wailing of the plover on the mosses, broke the hallowed stillness of the hour. No sign of trade was in the little market-place, no half-opened shop, no dilatory housewife hastening home with purchases just made, no rude children shouting in the street, or, if some small adventurous wight did rush out to greet a playmate, oblivious of Sabbatarian maxims, he was sure to be recalled with a maternal "Whist, bairn, whist! dinna forget 'tis t' blessed Sabbath morn."

Presently the bells—the grand old musical bells of the Priory-church—began to chime, and it seemed to some of

the Chalfonts people that the angels were singing from afar; and the key was turned in many a cottage door, and the barmaid at the "Thurston Arms" hurried on her bonnet, and Lamb, the butcher, gave his wife his arm, and with a whole array of bairns, two and two, in front, walked down the street the way the bells were calling them. The old women at the almshouses forgot their rheumatism, and mustered in full force that Sunday; the boys and girls from the Duchess's school were all ready to set forth as soon as the first bell struck out; and everybody, in short, from Dr. Redmayne himself down to the half-witted herd-boy from Aldingham, was ready betimes for church on that especial Sunday morning.

The nave of the great church, in which the service was held, grew fuller and fuller; the chiming ceased—one solitary bell, ringing hard and fast, warned all loiterers that morning prayers were just going to begin. The choristers were in their places, Crake had taken his seat below the reading-desk, and the rector issued from the vestry-door, and still no signs of any stranger in the great pew belonging to the Holt—no signs of any stranger anywhere! Mrs. Twentyman and her maids were in their usual places, but the Squire, as people were beginning to call him, came not anear. He wandered about the Chase all the morning, with Lyulph, of course, in attendance; the afternoon he spent on the great salt marsh, and the evening, with his hookah and the ruby-coloured wine, in the Abbot's Chamber. That the new master of Canonbury Holt was either Jew, Turk, heretic, or infidel, was quite apparent, and he became straightway unpopular. Dr. Redmayne shook his head, and thought he might possibly be a Roman Catholic, and Crake suggested a leaning to Methodism "or some other low form of worship;" but Mrs. Twentyman, being questioned, replied that "really she could not say; he had eaten goose and cutlets on Friday, and he had no crucifix in his room,

and that didn't look much like Romanism; as for Methodism, she knew nothing about it, having always kept her church, thank God; but she should think Dissenters did not *swear*, which this new master did. Her opinion was that he had no religion at all, and that Sunday was the same to him as any other day, for when the bells began to chime for morning service, he asked what all that clamour was about."

So Lyulph's master was set down as a veritable heathen, and Chalfonts virtuously resolved to have nothing to do with him. Chalfonts need not have troubled itself to make any such resolution, for the gentleman in question never dreamed of having anything to do with Chalfonts. Mrs. Redmayne, penitent and humbled, confessed to her husband that he was right, and took shame to herself that she should have associated him in her thoughts, even for an hour, with her darling daughter Clara.

"No doubt he has a wife," she said to the doctor, the last thing that night; "a poor deserted, miserable woman, I dare say. Nay, for aught we know, he may be a Mahommedan, or a Mormon, and have a dozen wives! I suppose you *must* call, my dear; but I shall not go near the Holt. What do you say, doctor?"

But the doctor was already in that debateable region popularly called the Land of Nod. Instead of replying he snored audibly, and Mrs. Redmayne composed herself to sleep; and horrible dreams of the quicksands and the deep pools in the salt marshes, and the mysterious lord of Canonbury Holt, haunted her that night. The doctor dreamed also; he thought he went to see the wonderful personage who had refused to show himself at church, and discovered to his infinite dismay that he was Pontius Pilate.

CHAPTER VII.

THE LADY OF THE MIST.

SALLY recovered, to Transome's infinite astonishment and dismay. Of course *Homœopathy* had nothing to do with it; of course it was just an effort of Nature, who sometimes does exert herself wonderfully, just at the very period when we blindly conclude she is overpowered, and ready to "give in." But, whatever might have been her salvation, Sally was standing on her feet next day, when the cow-doctor arrived to listen to an account of her expiring moments; and, had he not seen her with his own distended vision, and had he not felt her hide and horns and looked into her eyes, he never would have been assured that she really had survived the night, and might yet continue "the mother of the milky herd," till bucolic honours and advancing years should lay her low! Still, there she was, alive and not dead; and her appearance gave no hint of *post-mortem* arrangements to be concluded presently; she was evidently much better, and improving, as Jock informed him, every hour; so lest he should meet the young lady to whom he had given so rash a pledge the night before, Mr. Transome hurried off, declaring that he had an engagement elsewhere, and could not stay a minute longer, while Jock and his helpers laughed among themselves, and declared that "t' doctor didn't care to see Miss Bertie's laughing eyes; oh no, not he! 'twas uncommon grand to find Transome *scomfished* by a bit lassie, and her physic, that seemed meant for gnats and butterflies, and nothing bigger!"

Even Amy condescended to inquire whether "that poor animal" were dead or not; and, hearing of her welfare, she thought the opportunity a good one for lecturing Bertie on her want of dignity and general imprudence.

"Well," said Bertie, turning quickly round—she was standing before the glass, smoothing the disordered ringlets that had suffered from her morning walk across the moors—"what now, Amy? I have saved the poor thing's life; is that reprehensible, I pray?"

"Of course it was not wrong to keep the animal alive; but, Bertie, you took up the business as if it were your own."

"And so it was my own, while I was attending to it! I like that verse in the Bible, 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with *thy might*.' Indeed, Amy, if I undertake anything at all, I must give my whole heart to it. Where is the use of being half-hearted and half-handed? Better leave a duty altogether, than partially perform it."

"How could it be your duty to doctor a sick cow?"

"It is always everybody's duty to do all the good they can. If I had not prescribed for the creature she would have died. Moreover, I have introduced homœopathy into these regions, and who knows how far it may spread, or how many lives it may save!"

"The way you have taken up homœopathy is absurd."

"We will not discuss that point; only facts are proofs, and papa is with me."

"Yes; papa is always on your side, but I think he would not have been pleased had he seen all that has been going on here for the last few hours."

"Amy, what do you mean? speak out! you know I cannot bear covert hints."

Bertie's cheeks were scarlet as she spoke, and her dark eyes were flashing with something that looked very much like temper. Amy quailed before the keen, straightforward gaze of her younger sister, for she was pretty sure that what she had to say would exasperate her to the utmost pitch, and meekness was by no means one of Bertie's virtues; yet to keep silence now was impossible, Bertie would worry her till she spoke out all that was in

her mind. How heartily she wished she had profited by past experiences, and kept her censures to herself.

"Come," said Bertie, looking at her sternly; "out with it, Amy; what have I been doing that papa could possibly find fault with?"

"He would not approve of your being too intimate with James Musgrave."

"Oh! that is it. But I am not 'too intimate' with my cousin, Amy. You forget that he is Aunt Hannah's son, and the master of this house."

"I cannot forget mamma's warning; I am afraid for you, Bertie."

"Then pray lay aside your fears, or keep them to yourself. Now, Amy, remember, I *will not* have my name and James Musgrave's mixed up in this way! I *will not* have his sentiments or mine speculated upon! I hate this foolery that sees or suspects a lover in every man who pays one the ordinary attentions due to any lady, or with whom one happens to be associated! It is indelicate, Amy; vain, frivolous, unmaidenly. Fancy what you like about yourself, but leave me alone."

"I was only afraid you might be getting to like James; you need not be so angry, Bertie."

But Bertie was angry, and she showed it too.

"I tell you, Amy, this is just the sort of thing I will not submit to. I will not be warned and catechised. I am quite able to take care of myself. And if I did *like* James, as you call it, where would be the sin, or the shame, supposing, always, he liked me in return?"

Amy held up her hands in helpless dismay. At such moments she was wonderfully like her mother, who always poured out a torrent of vapouring words, and shed a few weak tears, and then let the matter take its course, whenever anything disturbed the equilibrium of her feelings.

"Bertie! Bertie!" she exclaimed, "you must be verg-

ing on lunacy. Can you not see what such a liking would probably end in?"

"In our marrying each other, probably, provided the said mutual 'liking' were a reality, instead of being, as it is, the offspring of your own imagination," replied Bertie, coolly.

"To think of marrying a man who wears such boots—a man that you have seen with a *pitchfork* in his hand!" murmured Amy, plaintively.

"Bond Street boots would be of little use on the Holt Farm lands," continued Bertie, laughing, in spite of her annoyance. "Fancy crossing the mosses, on the great salt-marsh, in pumps, or patent-leather things upon your feet. As to a pitchfork, is there any harm in that?"

"Not where it is in keeping, as it is in James Musgrave; but then let every one abide in his own station—and his station is that of a *farmer!* What could have induced Aunt Hannah to marry Mr. Musgrave?"

"I suppose she 'liked' him; and the Musgraves are as good an old family as the Thurstons or the Threlkelds; but I hate all this nonsense about family:—

> "'Kind hearts are more than coronets,
> And simple faith than Norman blood.'

And now we have had our last talk on this subject; for I will not be interfered with! I am going my own way, and you are going yours; and our ways have diverged ever since we were little things in the nursery; and the longer we live, the farther they will be apart! Therefore, in order to avoid contention, let us each take our own path, nor seek to trample on each other's toes. And now good-bye for the present. I am wanted in the kitchen. Anne has promised to show me how to make dumplings."

"Does not the cook make the dumplings?"

"Sometimes; but on busy days—on churning and washing days, for instance—Anne takes the pastry on herself. If you are good, Amy, you shall have one of my dump-

lings at dinner time. I have the most sanguine expectations of excelling in this new branch of study."

"What a state your dress will be in!"

"Not at all! Anne will lend me one of her cooking aprons; they are highly becoming, I assure you—such a pretty pink!"

"I devoutly hope no one will see you. I suppose there is little danger of that, in this isolated place; still, people have a strange habit of 'popping in' upon you about here, and they seem to prefer the back door to the front. I suppose you would not care to be caught up to your elbows in flour, and your fingers all over fat or suet—or whatever grease you use?"

"I should not care one atom about it, Amy. Why, don't you remember how Goethe's Charlotte was cutting bread and butter when that miserable Werter saw her first? I shall look quite as picturesque as she did; and, if some nobleman in disguise, or some prince who has lost his way, should by good chance look into the kitchen, who knows what may follow?"

But Bertie made her dumplings, and neither prince nor peer dropped in to admire her pretty rounded arms, and taper fingers; still, James came in, and sat down by the table, where the paste-making was being carried on, and he thought what a very nice girl Bertie was, and how cleverly she had learned her lesson, and how very much he preferred her to her sister, and what a pity it was she should be thrown away upon a town life, when country ways seemed so exactly suited to her. And, thinking thus, he unromantically ate the bread and cheese, and drank the glass of ale, which constituted his usual luncheon. Amy would have been more horrified than ever had she seen him, and had she heard him going into Sally's case, and trying to explain to the girls, especially to Bertie, a system of drainage by which, he felt persuaded, much of the marsh-land and the untilled mosses

might be redeemed from utter barrenness and desolation. Bertie was so interested, that she concluded to go down with Anne and James to the places mentioned that very afternoon. "She could understand the explanations better if she saw the grounds," she said; "and she would like to form an opinion as to her cousin's theory being practicable." Really there was far more fun in country life than in the measured existence she had only known till now.

Bertie's dumplings turned out excellently, and she told Amy she was going to learn the secret of raised pies next, and Miss Temple could only shrug her graceful shoulders, and feel silently afflicted. But she had a better opinion of James that day, for he inquired, with all due *empressement*, after her health, and hoped she felt no ill-effects from the fall occasioned by Lyulph's want of courtesy. Also he brought her in some choice winter-pears, and offered to bring her any books or music she might want, when he went to Lunechester. "After all," she said to herself, "he was better than he seemed! Still, there were the offending boots, and the ill-fitting shooting-jacket; but these might be remedied in time! What if she undertook the civilisation of her cousin James? He was not bad-looking, and he was really well-born; and if only he would dress more sensibly, and wear gloves, and abandon that awkward gait of his, he would be *almost* presentable!"

In the afternoon they all went down to the great marsh, the three girls and James; for Amy suddenly resolved to be included in the party. And there Mr. Musgrave explained and expounded, and illustrated and demonstrated, till Amy and Anne saw, or imagined they saw, quite clearly, the feasibility of the supposed "redemption of waste land."

"But what do you say, Bertie?" the young man asked at length; "you have not given us your opinion."

"You would not care to have it, James; for it does not coincide with your own."

"You think my scheme impracticable?"

"Not entirely! But it will take years to do what you propose; and think of the expense of all these dykes, and embankments, and breakwaters! One might as easily dissipate a splendid fortune in this sort of work as in mining."

"It would pay, Bertie! it would pay!"

"I am not sure of it; because it seems to me, that, do what you will, you can never certainly shut out the tide. You may toil and toil, and sink thousands of pounds in making all secure, and then, some day, an awful storm comes on, an unusually high tide sets in, winds and waves prevail, the sea sweeps in and carries all before it, and everything is lost."

"If the railway plan could only be carried out!" said Anne, who could not help feeling the sense of Bertie's words; "that would spoil the beach for us, but it would be a giant-barrier between these marsh-lands and the sea; but however they can think of crossing that impetuous channel I cannot conceive! Look at it now, or rather listen to it; it is only half-tide and nearly neap, and the waves are coming in like hungry animals, with tossing manes."

"The railway will certainly be a fact before many years are over our heads, Anne," said James; "and I think they will manage the channel by-and-by; they are surveying down at Earnseat now, and they will cross there, you will see; we shall have a viaduct from shore to shore, and then, Amy, we shall no longer be dwelling in the uttermost parts of the earth; there will be a link between us and our more civilised compatriots—there is even a chance that we may become tolerably civilised ourselves!"

Amy was quite uncertain whether James was speaking in satire, or in sober earnest, so she held her peace, and

wrapped her cloak around her, declaring it was getting very cold.

So it was: the sun had gone down behind the long low line of fells which terminates the peninsula of Bekanks, the tide was sweeping up the channel of the estuary with an angry swell, a cold, grey gloom rested on the waters of the bay, and the distant shores of Earnseat, and the cliffs of Argendale, were veiled in mist. Ingleborough and the Yorkshire hills had been blotted out since noon. All around them lay the desolate salt-marsh; on the one side, sloping barren rocks, and low brushwood that might lend some brightness to the scene in summer time, but now were only leafless, tangled thickets; on the other side, beyond the slow meandering streams, the death-like pools, the quagmires, the withering, scanty grass and reeds of the lone marsh, a deep pine-wood, black with natural shadows, and with the deepening gloom of the sad November twilight.

Bertie shivered as she looked about her; anything so *eerie*, so ghastly, so wildly mournful, she had never seen. It had been all very well while the sun was above the horizon: the colouring of the landscape had been most vivid; the most lovely ruby gleams among the hills, a glory unimaginable on the mountain tops, a rosy-purple glow upon the marsh itself, a sort of hyacinthine-flush upon the level sands, and dazzling golden lines upon the sea. Now it was all gone; and only they who know the beautiful wild northern land of which I speak can perfectly comprehend the almost magical effect upon the scene which is produced by the rapid fading of the wondrous tints and hues of sunset, and the settling of the shadowy grey twilight, wan and colourless, on water, waste, and fell.

They all, with one instinct, turned their faces homewards, away from the moaning channel-tide, and the wide expanse of sand and bay; but still before them stretched the solitary marsh, and the wind swept over it plaintively

and shudderingly, as it only sweeps across such drear desert-places.

"Are people ever lost in these marshes and mosses?" asked Bertie, presently.

"Not often," replied James; "the country-folk know the paths so well, and no others ever venture here; and the causeway is firm, and well defined, even for strangers. Still, I would not give much for the life of any one who should go crossing the marsh after sunset, especially at this time of the year; if he were not smothered in the bog, he would certainly be drowned in one of the deep, still pools, which the reeds and switch-grass nearly cover."

"And does the tide ever overflow them?"

"Of course it does now and then—that is our chief difficulty you know, or we might drain them fast enough. It would be quite easy to make water-courses for these streams, which are really driblets from the rivers; and the pools are not fathomless, I suppose, though the people say they are, and they could be filled up; but how to keep out the tide—the treacherous tide—is quite another thing. No sea-wall would be secure, no breakwater has ever stood the tremendous and mysterious tides which every now and then come to these parts, and alter the course of the channel. Twice, since I was a boy, has the face of things in the Earnseat estuary been changed entirely; and my mother remembers an awful tide that rose suddenly, out of time, one winter evening, and deluged the mosses, and half-drowned the shore-land villages, and reached nearly to the Holt Farm. Tracts that had been partially redeemed were covered with great drifts of sand; low-lying fields were deluged, even in Chalfonts itself, and there was great loss of cattle, and even of human life. It was an awful visitation!"

"How long was that ago?"

"Six and twenty years, or thereabouts; some parts of the Aldingham estates were actually washed away.

The elderly people about here always shake their heads and sigh, when you speak of the great tide of '24'! And they will tell you the 'lady of the mist' has not been seen since then!"

"And who may she be?"

"She has several histories, all of them dealing largely with the supernatural. Either she did something very wicked, or something very wicked was done to her; and whenever the tide is going to do terrible mischief, she comes across the sands and the marshes with the mist, wringing her hands, and throwing them up above her head, and making an audible wail. Her garments are white and floating, her hands are very white also, and her hair is long and fair, hanging like a veil about her; she is never seen but some great disaster is impending. Also, she takes a great interest in the family of the Thurstons, and, occasionally, I am told, finds her way to Canonbury Holt. I am glad to say, she has never, as yet, visited the farm."

"You speak as if you believed it all, and Anne looks as serious as if she were listening to a sermon." And Bertie gazed out across the desolate waste, and shivered.

James smiled. "Well, I cannot say I do really believe the story; and yet, I have heard it so many times, and seen so many people who declare *they* saw the mist-lady before that tide, wringing her white hands, and tearing her long fair hair, and wailing like a banshee, that—superstitious as you may deem me—I cannot 'pooh-pooh' it, as a town-bred man would. But we never talk about her; it is believed that talking of her brings her; I am sure I don't know why I spoke of her this evening."

There was a sharp little cry from Amy, a cry of unaffected terror; and she hid her face in the folds of the objectionable shooting-jacket and trembled violently. "What is it?" cried they all, utterly aghast.

"There she is!" sobbed Amy, pointing towards a network of interlacing, sluggish little streams, gleaming

coldly through the twilight. "Ah! she is coming towards us!"

"What nonsense, Amy!" began Bertie, angrily, "frightening us all, and making us ashamed of ourselves. I, for one, don't believe in ghosts, or ghostesses either, and——"

She stopped short: through the fast rising mist something moved, something white was wildly waved upon the breeze, and, like a lament, the low wind swept past them as they stood and listened.

Amy turned again, and clung closely to the shooting-jacket. Bertie, too, clasped James's arm; the girls certainly believed he could protect them from the unearthly lady of the mist. Anne watched quietly, but with a nervous clasp of the hands that showed how far she was from calmness—again, there was nothing to be seen, only reeds, and wreaths of vapour, and pale glimmering water.

"There is nothing," said Bertie, confidently. "How foolish we were! What pranks one's imagination plays one! Ah! again—James! Anne!—*look!*"

No need to bid them look, for now they distinctly saw the white folds rise and fall. "And there is no path there," said James.

"*None!*" was Anne's emphatic rejoinder; "no mortal foot could cross from there to us, or could reach the causeway, save from quite another point. Between us and *it* the stream lies deep—the ground is worse than insecure; there is literally no footing! Oh! what is that?"

A rush, a howl, a great bay, rather than a bark, and Lyulph, dripping, and almost trembling, stood beside them; he lay down as if in supplication; he whined piteously; then he began to retrace his steps, paused, came back again, and finally thrust his head into Anne's hand, as if beseeching her assistance.

"It is not the mist-lady; it is the master of Canonbury Holt waving his handkerchief," said Anne, quietly; "this

is the hound we saw with him yesterday!" Then clearly they saw a human figure struggling through the reeds. James could not stir, Amy was all but lifeless in his arms. Bertie clung to him still. Anne did not wait to think about it; she plunged into the morass, where she knew the ground, though soft and wet, was tolerably safe, and, going as far as she dared, came within ear-shot of the person whose life was in such peril, and shouted, "Stop! not an inch further! I will show you the way."

On she floundered, ankle-deep, in yielding alluvial bog-earth, the water gushing up and round at every step, and she could make her way but slowly, for a yard or two to the right or to the left might make all the difference. At last she again reached the causeway, which traversed two sides of the marsh, and was once more on firm ground. Then she pointed to the stranger the path he must take, and he obeyed her warily and hesitatingly at first, for he sank and sank as he advanced, and the water more than once reached to his knees. But he seemed to gain confidence, and when Anne bade him cross a ditch or stream that seemed to him far from shallow he plunged resolutely in and landed safe on the other side. There was still a stretch of quagmire to be crossed, but there were sunken stepping-stones that gave some kind of footing, and Anne came down the bank and extended her hand, and the stranger took it, and seemed surprised to find how firm a clasp it gave. In another minute, he, his guide, and the hound Lyulph, stood on the causeway.

"Madam! I probably owe my life to you," said the rescued man. It was the same deep, cold voice she had heard the night before. "I am not sure that it is a life at all worth saving—still, I thank you heartily. Few women are as brave and as self-possessed."

"It is simply that I know the ground," said Anne; "I have botanised here so often. There was, really, little, if any, danger to myself."

"Still, I thank you for your promptness. May I venture to inquire your name?"

"I am Anne Musgrave, of the Holt Farm."

"And I am Gerard Thurston. Gerard Thurston humbly thanks Miss Musgrave, and wishes her good evening."

And on he strode, and Lyulph after him, and Anne was left alone upon the lonely causeway; but the dog looked back, and whined, and gave little friendly barks, as if he were unwilling to part so abruptly from his master's fair preserver. Anne was necessarily very wet, and, perceiving that her brother and cousins were now not very far behind, she hastened home as fast as possible.

CHAPTER VIII.

A PASTORAL VISIT.

I HAVE recorded before, in a previous chapter, the impression produced on the good town of Chalfonts by the Squire's non-appearance in the Holt family-pew, on the Sunday morning after his arrival. The Chalfonts people, from the Duke to the cobbler, were emphatically a church-going people; they revered their spiritual master and pastor, as the catechism instructed them, from their youth upwards, and they were eminently "proper" and respectable. There was no talk about High Church or Low Church in the peaceful Chalfonts valley. Broad Church had scarcely begun to be discussed anywhere; Ritualism, of course, was a thing undreamed of, and Dissent was utterly unknown. As for politics, the whole country-side went with the Duke, and pledged themselves to his principles, without in the least comprehending what they were, excepting, indeed, James Musgrave, who held his own

opinions on certain subjects, and entertained divers wild and erratic notions, at mention of which Dr. Redmayne, and Mr. Littledale, his Grace's steward, shook their heads, and looked despondingly. It was also whispered about, from St. Ulpha's to Grangeside and Earnseat, that, if there was such a thing as a *Dissenter* within sound of the grand old musical bells of the Priory, James Musgrave was that solitary and altogether objectionable thing. What with his steam-engines, his newly-invented plough, his unheard-of "food for cattle," his schemes for draining and utilising waste lands, "going right agin' Providence," as Crake, the clerk, averred; his strange conversations with his men, and his Sunday evening service, at which, however, he read the Church prayers, in the great farm kitchen, Chalfonts could not help regarding him as in some sort a suspicious character, though his morality, integrity, and honour were declared, on all hands, to be unimpeachable. So you may readily conjecture that everybody looked upon the new master of Canonbury Holt as upon a heathen and publican, and the good wives of the town were for immediately organising a sort of extempore home-missionary society, for his individual conversion. The strangest stories were rife about him before the week was half over; it was presumed that he had committed some great crime, and had come to the Holt to hide himself from a justly reproving world; then it was alleged that he really was a Mohammedan, and owned about five-and-twenty wives, whom, as yet, he had not dared to bring to England, for fear of public opinion; and "society," as represented at Chalfonts by half-a-dozen matrons of repute, virtuously drew itself up, and determined never to call at the Holt, and on no account to recognise *any* of the Mrs. Thurstons, whom, it was presumed, would be arriving by-and-by. Lastly, and as a more reasonable scandal, it was rumoured about that he had directly or indirectly murdered his wife; and also, though the two accounts were some-

what contradictory, that he had deserted the partner of his life, and left her with half-a-dozen children, to pine in miserable obscurity abroad.

None of these complimentary narrations reached the ears of Gerard Thurston; as he never concerned himself about other people, he simply concluded that other people would not concern themselves about him or his affairs—a grand mistake, which proved the master of Canonbury Holt, in spite of much travel, and strange experiences, to be singularly ignorant of human nature. But, if he had heard every word that transpired about him, it would only have provoked a grim smile, and a certain satisfaction, arising from the presumption which such evidence afforded, that he would be let alone and left to his own devices in the stronghold of his ancestral halls, with Lyulph and Swingleswairy for sole companions.

But "letting alone" is not to the taste of English people generally, especially people whose ideas are necessarily limited, as were those of the good Chalfonts folk. "Society" may repudiate you; it may pass you by with cold indifference, or a haughty stare, or perhaps a pious sniff; it may pronounce on you sentence of banishment "to Coventry," without any reference to the city of Godiva, and the "three tall spires;" it may be shocked, pained, horrified, scandalised to the very last degree, but it will never!—no, never!—*leave you alone*, in the full sense of the word. Hope it not! It will dissect every atom of your known, ay, of your unknown life; it will pull your character, real or supposed, into little shreds; it will discuss your probable motives, and suggest those which are improbable; it will denounce you, shake off the dust of its feet as a testimony against you, even pity you, after a fashion; but it will not leave you to your own solitary reflections.

All day on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, people talked, and talked, and talked, as if they had nothing else

to do. Some talked in whispers, and some in audible plainest English, and in the broadest of North-country accents; and everybody concurred in the opinion that "something ought to be done;" the Duke ought to be written to; the doctor ought to hold a special Commination-service, with bell, book, and candle, in the church; some thought the Queen should be memorialised; anything rather than Chalfonts should be cursed with the continual presence of a man who might be in league with Beelzebub himself, and who might have all the powers of darkness at his command. Had Gerard Thurston come to Chalfonts a century-and-a-half earlier, he would probably have paid for his unpopularity with his life. But the days of wizards, and sorcerers, and warlocks were long past; though still a league with Satan was held to be quite practicable, and, in the present instance, highly probable. That dream which had confused Pontius Pilate with the mysterious stranger at the Holt, had made a deep impression on the rector's mind; and it was not without trepidation that, on the Thursday morning, he prepared, as for a stern and imperative duty, to call upon the Squire. It was a pity that, as a Protestant clergyman, he could not avail himself of crucifix and holy water by way of talisman; but he drank several glasses of his oldest port, and with his Prayer-book in his pocket, sallied forth to the encounter. Of course, Mrs. Redmayne did not accompany him; if, for a few brief hours, she had indulged in matrimonial castle-building, she was severely punished; she was even glad to think that her beautiful daughter Clara, and her witty, brilliant Jessie, were safe away in Levensdale.

"I wish to see Mr. Thurston," said the doctor, as, approaching the grand entrance, he encountered Swingleswairy—by this time the Squire's name had transpired.

Swingleswairy bowed himself almost to prostration, and jabbered and *salaamed* the portly *sahib*, but did not

succeed in making himself understood; and the doctor's perplexity was increasing to annoyance, when Mrs. Twentyman, with her stately but deferential curtsey, came upon the scene.

"Ah! Mrs. Twentyman!" cried the doctor, much relieved, "I have called to see your master, and I cannot make this man, his personal servant, I suppose, comprehend me. Is Mr. Thurston at home?"

"He is, sir; but he does not receive visitors."

"Perhaps not; indeed, I should conclude so; but tell him *I* am here—say the Rector of Chalfonts will have the honour of waiting upon him."

And Dr. Redmayne felt that really and truly the honour was all on the other side. Perhaps Mrs. Twentyman would have thought so, too, had she not known that her master was a veritable Thurston; the lineal, and, as far as she knew, the only descendant of *the* family, whom she served and honoured with feudal homage and fidelity; for, though she and her family had served the Clegsons and the rollicking O'Gradys, she came from a race who had been from time immemorial the retainers of the Thurstons. Lyulph might have roast pheasant and hare-soup for his supper, now that she knew who his master and hers really was.

Between her reverence for her pastor and her dread of offending the Squire, Mrs. Twentyman was in a predicament. She would coolly have dismissed anybody else, but the clergy, according to her creed, were not to be trifled with; therefore, requesting the doctor to take a seat while she carried in his card to the master, she disappeared, leaving the reverend gentleman to his own reflections. Presently he heard sounds of music—some one with a masterly hand was touching the keys of a grand pianoforte, and the good doctor, who loved harmony with all his soul, drew nearer the door, whence the sweet strains issued. He listened, and forgot that he was

waiting; he listened, and was ravished! Instead of Pontius Pilate, was it not Mendelssohn himself? or was it Handel or Mozart come back in the flesh? He forgot that he was kept waiting—that *he*, the Rector of Chalfonts, was subjected to an indignity unprecedented. He scarcely breathed, lest a single note should escape his fine and critical ear; chord after chord rang out, and cadences swept richly down the keys, and he sighed at last when all was done, and the glorious music was heard no more. Soon afterwards Mrs. Twentyman returned, full of apologies; she could not help it, she said, the master was playing, and he only waved her away when she tried to speak to him; he would not listen till he had finished his music-making; but he would see Dr. Redmayne.

The good housekeeper did not say how at first Mr. Thurston had sworn he would see "no black-coated, sleek-faced, false-tongued parsons;" nor how, afterwards, with another oath, he had said, "Yes! better see him, or the fellow will be always in the way! He wants money, no doubt. Well, that is natural; he shall have it, on condition he keeps his distance, and preaches me no private sermons."

So Dr. Redmayne was ushered into the large parlour which Mr. Thurston now occupied.

The Squire rose when his visitor entered, bowed haughtily, waved his hand, with a gesture of command, towards a seat, and waited for the doctor to commence the conversation; and the doctor felt taken rather aback at this unwonted, and perfectly cool style of demeanour.

"A fine morning, sir," began the poor clergyman, pressing the weather into his service, as our frail humanity is given to do, when it *must* talk, and knows not what to talk about.

Mr. Thurston bowed courteously, but very frigidly; not a line of his proud dark face relaxed, and his cold, melancholy eyes were fixed searchingly on the doctor's counte-

nance. Never had that reverend personage felt so nonplussed since he had worn a gown; he had dealt with divers kinds of sinners, and he rather prided himself on his tact in such dealings, but at the present moment he knew not how to proceed, and, at last, he stammered out —"I am the rector of the parish."

Mr. Thurston bowed again; and Dr. Redmayne felt that he must say something to make him speak, or he would go frantic on the spot. So valorously he plunged into the subject which had primarily given rise to so many discussions, and to all the grave suspicions afloat in Chalfonts.

"I had not the pleasure of seeing you at church, Mr. Thurston, on Sunday morning."

Again Mr. Thurston bowed, with frigid courtesy and a stern regard that froze the rector's very soul. Was he dumb? Could he only speak a foreign language? the rector had half a mind to try him with Latin. But Amy Temple had already narrated her little adventure to Mrs. Redmayne; and to Miss Temple or to her cousin he had spoken English intelligibly, though, as both girls said, with an intonation not purely insular.

"May I venture to hope that you are of our communion?" was the rector's next sentence.

Would there be a mute inclination this time? No! Mr. Thurston threw back his haughty head, and coldly replied, "I am not of your communion, sir."

"A Roman Catholic, probably? Well, I respect the ancient faith, though I, of course, believe in the superior purity of our own Reformed Church. I am no bigot, Mr. Thurston."

"I am glad to hear it, Dr. Redmayne."

"There is a chapel of your creed at St Ulpha's, and one at Lunechester; none nearer, I am afraid. But you will probably restore your own private chapel, and have your confessor or chaplain in the house. I am sorry, Mr.

Thurston, of course. I had hoped great things when I heard the Holt was to be tenanted again!"

"What kind of things did you hope?"

"Well, I hardly know; my hopes were vague, of course, till I could see you, and ascertain your views; but I hoped for your influence in the right direction—your example, your aid, in many ways."

"You hoped also for my money, I should imagine."

"Certainly; that would have come as a matter of course, had you been of our faith. After the Duke, I should have looked to you for the aid which temporal wealth is privileged to bestow upon the Church. We are thinking of restorations, and the Duke quite concurs, though not so heartily as I could wish. You might have been of eminent service in this direction, but since you are a Catholic——"

"Who told you I was a Catholic, or, rather, I should say, *a Papist!*"

"I beg your pardon; I thought you told me so yourself."

"I merely said I was not of your communion, and you took the rest for granted. Have you settled your theology after the same fashion, Dr. Redmayne?—proved one negative, and then jumped to a conclusion for all the remainder of your belief? I am *not* a servant of his so-called Holiness."

There was something so ultra-Protestant, the doctor thought, in this speech, that he rushed immediately to another extreme conclusion. With regret in look and tone, he inquired—"You have, then, sir, joined one of the sects, I presume?"

"I know nothing of sects, sir."

The doctor began to fear that the Mohammedan theory was, after all, correct, and the dreadfully demoralising influence of five-and-twenty Mrs. Thurstons at the Holt rose appallingly before his view. He felt himself com-

pelled to make one more effort: "Then, my dear sir, excuse me, but to what communion *do* you belong?"

"To no communion, Doctor Redmayne! Listen! I never go to church; I keep no holy days: the book of Nature is my Bible, and I am my own conscience-keeper, if a conscience I possess. I want no priest to tell me of my sins; any attempt to convert me from the error of my ways will be breath spent in vain, and, after this declaration, I shall receive any such endeavour as impertinence, to be chastised according to its merit. If you want money you shall have it, but I do not want your ghostly counsel. How much shall I give you for your charities, and your restorations?"

"Not one penny, Mr. Thurston; I would rather, after your confession, take the widow's mite from the poorest of my flock, than ten thousand pounds from you! I should expect a curse rather than a blessing, on a gift from you: keep your gold, sir; I am sorry for you, for you are poor indeed! May God forgive you, and may His Spirit strive with you, and show you the awful precipice on which you stand."

Gerard Thurston was surprised; here was a man, a priest—a parson, rather—who refused *money!* "Doctor Redmayne might be a fool, in some sort a deceiver, but he was not a knave. He was honest and true, according to his lights."

Once again, and more blandly, Gerard proffered "any sum that might be wanted," but in vain. The doctor was scarcely what people would call "an earnest man;" he was behind the times, he was not thoroughly alive to the solemn responsibilities of his sacred office; he was of the old school of divines, and neither missionary meetings and Bible-classes, nor daily services and sisterhoods were in the category of the duties to which his ordination vows had pledged him. But he was perfectly sincere, and he had a great horror of scepticism; and he would as soon

have taken the wages of iniquity and spent them on holy things, as have accepted aught for God's service from this unbeliever. More courteously than he had received the doctor, Mr. Thurston bowed him to the door. The good man went home heavy at heart, and, in answer to his wife's eager inquiries, only replied, "Pray for him, my dear; pray for him! he is a most unhappy man; no effort of ours can change him, I am persuaded; so, my love, we will pray for him."

And Mrs. Redmayne looked tenderly into her husband's troubled countenance, and said, "It is written, my dear, that the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

CHAPTER IX.

CHRISTMAS EVE.

SUNDAYS came and went; the latest tints of a very late autumn faded from the landscape; the sweet full chiming of the Priory-church bells was borne upon the wintry breeze, through the peaceful Chalfonts valley, as week after week they called the people to come up to the sanctuary to worship in the great congregation; and the happy Christmas-tide was near at hand. There was little actual poverty on the Aldingham and Canonbury estates; but still there were annual gifts to be dispensed, there were old women looking for their warm new flannels, labourers expecting their Christmas beef, children wondering what their school-prizes would be like, while the "Duchess's girls" knew perfectly well that they would walk to church on Christmas morning in bran-new linsey dresses, new clump-boots, and new straw bonnets, neatly trimmed with cherry-coloured ribbon.

Everybody in and about the little town was very busy. Mrs. Redmayne and her daughters had enough to do at the Rectory; Mr. Wilson's housekeeper declared it was a good thing that Christmas came but once a year, and as for the people at the Holt Farm, it was astonishing how much work they found to do, and how thoroughly they did it! Bertie came out grandly in the culinary department; not only did she conquer the mysteries of raised-pies, and produce such dumplings as James declared were superior to all other dumplings upon earth, but she achieved no end of mince-meat, compounded the pudding, under Anne's directions, with her own fair hands, to the entire satisfaction of its fortunate consumers, and received honourable mention for the stuffing of a turkey which had been left to her alone. Bertie was becoming quite a domestic character, and James thought so too; and sighed when he reflected that, in several months at the latest, she would be going back to Kensington, to be turned again into a mere fashionable young lady.

Mrs. Twentyman also made puddings and mince-pies, as an orthodox Englishwoman should; but with a sad misgiving in her own mind that her very unorthodox master would, in all probability, despise the substantial dainties she took so much pains to provide for his solitary table. Already he had sorely tried her patience by ordering unheard-of dishes, queer curries, and spiced ragout, such as the Anglo-Indian soul loveth, but which the British soul commonly eschews; and he had almost driven her to open revolt on several occasions, when he had installed Swingleswairy in the kitchen, with full power over the pots and kettles, an unlimited supply of rice, plenty of *chutnee*, and a lot of condiments of the funniest description.

Still, as in duty bound, Mrs. Twentyman made a notable plum-pudding, and provided one of her plumpest, tenderest turkeys, and ordered a splendid piece of beef,

for the master's delectation. Of course, the usual Christmas fare was in readiness for her own table, and the servants'-hall; for the establishment at Canonbury Holt had been increased of late, Swingleswairy and Lyulph requiring a maid each, the housekeeper observed, to follow them about, and make things decent after them.

As for the master himself, it was very doubtful whether he knew anything about Christmas, or its observances—religious or social. Where he had lived till now nobody knew, unless it were the Ribbleton lawyer, who was reticent and prudent, as became his calling. As Mr. Thurston never talked freely to any one but Lyulph, there was no gleaning any information respecting his antecedents from promiscuous remarks, or from chance allusions; and Swingleswairy, who was rapidly acquiring so much English as enabled him to communicate with his fellow-servants, invariably retired into his shell when any one showed symptoms of curiosity, and to every question, direct or indirect, referring however slightly to the life which he had led with his master, before they made their unexpected appearance at the Holt, he answered only in his native language, whatever that might be. As Mrs. Crake remarked, to some of her congeners, over an early cup of tea, "It was aggravating to the last degree: there was no putting two and two together to make four, where the new Squire was concerned. Nobody knew how old he was, nor whether he was married, nor where he had been brought up, nor where his money came from, though it was evident he had plenty of it. Altogether, he was the greatest trouble to Chalfonts that ever came into it."

It was Christmas-eve, and a clear, cold day; the ground was hard as iron, and the terrible pools and quagmires of the marshes were frozen over; it was just the sort of day that raises the spirits of the healthy and the young, though it makes the invalid shudder, and suggests rheumatism, and coughs, and colds to those advanced in years. Anne

Musgrave rejoiced in the fine keen air, and the dazzling sunshine, and, immediately after her early dinner, she set out to Cockleham, to visit some poor old fisher-wives, whom she had very quietly elected to be her pensioners. Amy refused to leave the house; indeed, as being a delicate plant, committed to her care, Mrs. Musgrave was quite willing to keep her from the searching blast, and to let her read her novel by the fire in peace. Bertie, when inquired for, was missing; but Jock reported that "she had ganged wi t' master o'er t' hills, Grangeside way!" So Anne was constrained to go alone; but that did not matter, for nearly all her rambles were solitary till her cousins came, and Fellshire generally had no idea of being scandalised because a young lady walked about unattended at any hour between dawn and utter darkness. She took her way along "Moss-side," towards the cliffs, which overhung the little village of Cockleham. How beautiful it was! the intense blue sky, lightly flecked here and there with fleecy scraps of cloud; the dark-brown moorlands, the darker hills, and the distant mountain-tops, all one mass of dazzling whiteness. Then the bay, sparkling at full tide, in the wintry sunshine; the wild shore of Earnseat, the silvery rocks of Argendale, and the channel-waters, apparently dancing in their glee, as they tossed and tumbled with their foaming crests up the broad estuary. And yet there would be snow ere midnight Anne was sure. That soft grey haze in the north told her that the morrow's sun would rise upon a world all white; it would be a real, grand old-fashioned Christmas-day. And Anne's happy heart bounded at the thought of the walk to church, with the deep snow lying on the ancient graves, and on the nearer fells, and at the thought of the Christmas-hymn, echoing through the long-arched aisles of the glorious old Priory, whose every stone and pinnacle she loved with all her soul. Her visits took her rather longer than she had anticipated, and when she came out of the

last cottage, with an empty basket, and a face all glowing with the joy of "giving" not only food and raiment, but kind words and sympathising looks, the sun was just dipping his large red disc behind the lonely crags of Blackmoor-Combe, a mountain far away beyond the sheltering hills of Bekanks.

Little Anne cared for that; for there was a full moon already rising in the sky, and that purple flush upon the bay, and that golden glory of mingled cloud and snow upon the far-off mountain ranges, were worth looking at, for all the cold and fading of the daylight. She decided to go home by the salt-marsh; it was more sheltered than the moorland road, and she wanted to see how it looked in its new dress of icy mail; moreover, it would be scarcely half a mile longer than the other way. As for meeting any one, save a cockler, or a fisherman, or, nearer home, some labourer or child she knew, she never dreamed of such a thing.

The marsh was weird-looking and desolate as ever, but very beautiful Anne thought; only the grey clouds rose rapidly, and veiled the rising moon, and the wind whistled mournfully among the reeds; and she felt that she must quicken her pace if she would not be out to greet the first flakes of the storm. She went on, singing in her clear full voice—a rich and silvery soprano—a Christmas carol she had learnt when a little child; and she was half way along the raised path, which I told you described two sides of a right-angle, when a sound broke on her ear, and she stopped to listen. There was a rush, a scatter among the reeds and the brushwood near at hand, and Lyulph sprang out to greet her, with every manifestation of excessive joy; and in another moment Gerard Thurston sprang up the steep side of the causeway, gun in hand, as if he came from the covert or the little wood.

"Miss Musgrave, I believe," he said, making his usual courteous but proud obeisance.

Anne as proudly answered, "Yes. Mr. Thurston, I perceive."

"I knew it must be Miss Musgrave by Lyulph's demonstrations. As a rule he is rude to women—as he was the first day I saw you."

Anne made no reply, and the hound and his master walked on with her for some little way in silence. Then Lyulph again began to express his satisfaction, and Mr. Thurston observed, "I have reason to remember this spot, Miss Musgrave."

"Yes; your ramble might have had a fatal ending. What made you go on to the marsh?"

"I thought I had braved greater perils than I could possibly find there, and I wanted to cross from the shore quickly, and the causeway takes one such a round. Miss Musgrave, I have been lost on Chimborazo; I have been half-buried in an Alpine avalanche; I have traversed endless forests and dreadful swamps in the Western world; I have been in extremity in African deserts; I have been shipwrecked; I have been wounded and left to my fate in an Indian jungle with the tigers. Judge, then, if I should shrink back from the dangers of a place like this,—and my dinner waiting for me, and I fasting from the morning."

"I suppose not, and yet—this place has been fatal. No one knows the depths of some of those holes."

"Well, you certainly saved my life, Miss Musgrave, and again I thank you, though you saved what was of no great worth."

"A life must always be of worth; while God preserves it, it must be of value."

"What had God to do with it? It is you I have to thank—not God."

"That is a mistake. God sent me here that evening; and, if He had not sent me, He would have sent some one else."

"I really do not know why God should have concerned Himself about it."

"Your heavenly Father cares for you, and I do not doubt that He has preserved your life, because He has some work for you to do."

"What kind of work, Miss Musgrave?"

"Ah! that I cannot tell. It is only about our own work that we can be sure. When we get to speculating about other people's tasks, we are very likely to neglect our own: let each one cultivate his own vineyard."

"But I do not recognise any obligations of the kind, Miss Musgrave."

"What, then, do you suppose God gave you life for?"

"I must confess that has often puzzled me. Indeed, I have often wondered why many people were born in the world. It appears to me that life was given them only that they might suffer in various ways, having, at the same time, a capacity for happiness."

"That is a problem, I suppose, that has troubled many; but, Mr. Thurston, since its solution is so difficult, would it not be better to confine oneself simply to making the best of one's own life."

"What is the best? So very often what seems the best turns out to be the worst."

"God will show us what is best, if we trust in Him."

"I have no trust in God."

"I am so sorry for you."

The real sadness and pity of Anne's tones went to Thurston's heart, there was something so deep, so genuine, yet so simple, in the compassion she evinced; yet he went on to say,—"I know something of religion, Miss Musgrave. I have seen it under every aspect. I have tried to do, in outward seeming, at least, as other men do; but I have always been repelled. I hate priestcraft."

"But that is no reason why you should hate God."

"I do not hate Him."

"But you do not love Him."

"He has given me small cause to love Him?"

"Oh, hush! you do not know what you are saying."

"May I ask you if you love Him yourself?"

"I do love Him with all my heart, Mr. Thurston; and yet it is my sorrow that I do not love Him more—do not serve Him better."

They were parting now, for they had reached Moss-Head, where there was a private gate leading, by a short cut, to the farm. The moon shone out for an instant, and lighted up Anne's clear, calm, earnest face, and she met her companion's gaze serene and unabashed. He felt that she spoke the simple truth. He seemed at that moment to be reading her very soul; and a pure and holy book it was to him, after other pages he had read in days gone by—after the drear and darkened chronicles he had perused whenever he turned his gaze within.

Anne told her mother of this strange interview; but she did not speak of it to any one else. Next morning, the whole congregation assembled in Chalfonts Church were electrified, and forgot all about their prayer-books, and probably for the moment all about their prayers; for, just as the Doctor was solemly pronouncing the words, "When the wicked man," &c., the master of Canonbury Holt walked up the aisle, preceded by the bustling little verger, and took possession of the pew appropriated from time immemorial to the Thurston family.

CHAPTER X.

NEW YEAR'S EVE.

It was the last evening of the old year! One thousand eight hundred and fifty was sighing out his last hours in fitful blasts that swept mournfully over the marshes, the

mosses, and the dreary sands; while, like a shroud ready for his burial, the deep, unspotted snow covered hill and dale and solitary moorland. Like funeral plumes, too, the dark pine trees waved their heavy heads above the cold white waste, and, like a dirge, the wind wailed in the bare woods and about the towers of Canonbury Holt. The poor old year lay on his death-bed like a discrowned king, with hoary locks, and dim, fast-fading vision, passing from the joys and griefs and pressing cares of time into the great eternity.

Gerard Thurston had just finished his late dinner; late, that is, for Chalfonts and its neighbourhood. Only the Duke dined at eight o'clock, and the Canonbury Holt dinner hour was six. The hot-spiced meats in which the Squire delighted were taken away; soup, made of some queer gelatinous stuff, looking wonderfully like common glue, and smelling, Mrs. Twentyman averred, of addled eggs and mouldy pickles, had preceded the ragouts, and curries, and devilled *something*, chiefly compounded of cayenne, rice, truffles, and lobsters' claws! and now the scorned mince pies having been devoured by Lyulph, who evidently thought it great fun to take them down with a snap and a bite, as some people take boluses; and the dessert of roasted chestnuts and candied fruits, flanked by wines that no one in Fellshire, save perhaps his Grace of Aldingham, had ever heard of, being set on the table, the master of the Holt gave himself up to his solitary reflections; Lyulph lying couchant on the hearth, his nose between his fore paws, evidently waiting a favourable opportunity for commencing one of those conversations in which, poor brute, he took the best share he could, wagging his tail, or moaning, or sighing, or growling, as his feelings prompted him, according to the communications he received.

It was not long before the Squire addressed him.

"Well, what is it now, old boy?"

Lyulph came nearer, and planting his fore feet on his master's knees, brought his own visage on a level with the one he loved best in all the world, and by his solemn regards, and a little expressive whine, intimated his readiness to listen to any confidences that might be forthcoming.

"That will do, Lyulph, that will do! don't be too demonstrative. So we had our walk for nothing this afternoon, and you were disappointed! And yet not quite for nothing, for we found somebody's lost property, and it must be restored. I wonder if it had lain there on the edge of this causeway ever since this day week, or whether it had been dropped more recently. Of course it has been missed; and if there should be a hue and cry, and a reward offered, then it is you and I, Lyulph, that are the lucky finders. But suppose we took it home at once, eh! good hound—you and I, this very evening? It is not late, and perhaps the lassie is fretting her heart out for the loss of her gew-gaw; perhaps the value of this circlet of gold, and these pearls, and this curl of chestnut hair, may be to her immensely beyond its real worth! Whose hair is it, I wonder? It is redder than that of the young fellow I take to be her brother; is it Esau's, or Cœur-de-Lion's, or Will Scarlet's, of Sherwood Forest? or is it the lock of some rustic lover who will speedily convert her into a model farmer's wife, great at cheeses, clever in the dairy, successful in rearing chickens, children, and young ducks? I dare say it is. It is the most natural thing after all! and what is it to us? You evidently object to such a future for Miss Musgrave, Lyulph; you think she is too good to be wasted on a country clod-hopper—too much of a gentlewoman, too superior in tone and manner! I think so likewise; but then, as it is nothing to you, it is nothing to me, doggie!

"But, Lyulph, if there really be such a thing as a good, true woman on earth—mind, I say '*if*,' and say it very

heartily—she is that woman! Did you ever see such clear, honest eyes, Lyulph? eyes looking straight into your own soul, and yet letting you see, through their crystalline depths, something of the purity and strength of the beautiful soul that looked through them? I rather think, Lyulph, that we have neither of us seen such eyes before! And then her voice, so quiet, so sweet, so perfectly modulated with just the least touch of the musical accent of this wild north country. *She*, a mere farmer's daughter! I cannot and will not credit it; we will ask Mrs. Twentyman about the Holt Farm people. I think, but I am not sure, Best said they were *not* my tenants; though the farm was once part and parcel of the Holt property, a dower-house, or younger son's portion, or something of that sort. Ring the bell, Lyulph."

Lyulph obeyed; he rose at once, as if at the word of command, and hooking his great paw into the ring that was at the end of the old-fashioned tri-coloured bell-rope, rang a hearty peal that quickly brought to the room one of the upper servants, who was dispatched to summon Mrs. Twentyman to an audience.

She came, radiantly attired and beaming with good temper; and as she opened the door, faint sounds of mirth seemed to die away in the long galleries she had traversed, and her master frowningly inquired "what all that riot was about."

"It is only the servants, sir, having a little dance among themselves," replied Mrs. Twentyman, feeling as she spoke how great a liberty she had taken, in permitting the said dance to be inaugurated on her own responsibility; for the master's brow was dark, and looking at his eyes and at Lyulph's, she scarcely knew which had the more dangerous expression. Lyulph uttered a low growl, and shook himself menacingly; anything in the shape of petticoats always exasperated him, and there were times when they acted upon him very much as a scarlet flag would act upon

a bull, or a turkey-cock—only Miss Musgrave's petticoats were approved by him.

"Lie still, sir!" said Mr. Thurston to his hound, in German; a language, by the way, in which he frequently addressed Lyulph, probably on account of the creature's Teutonic birth and breeding, though Lyulph, dumb animal as he was, seemed really a great linguist, since he certainly comprehended all that his master said to him, whether it were in English, in German, or any other Continental tongue, or in one of the Oriental dialects they had brought with them from far-off countries of the sun! Lyulph, wearing an air of apparent submission, but still keeping a keen eye on the housekeeper's crimson skirts, lay down quietly on the rug, and his master proceeded.

"A dance, did you say, Mrs. Twentyman? I have heard nothing of it."

"Oh! sir, not a proper dance, only a bit of a hop in the servants' hall. The men and the maids always look for it on New Year's Eve; the Duke's servants have quite a ball, and at the Rectory the young ladies play the piano for them. There used to be grand doings here in the old time, I am told. I have heard my grandmother say how the young Squire would take all the lasses in turn for his partners, and how your grandmother's mother condescended to dance the Roger de Coverley with the butler, who was my own great uncle, and married to the then housekeeper of the Holt. I should have asked you, sir, whether you objected to the custom, but I did not like to disturb you, to trouble you about such a trifle."

"Well, it is of no consequence," and the master unbent his haughty brows. "Let them keep up the old custom, if they are such fools as to find pleasure in it. But, Mrs. Twentyman, when I came here, I found you with a very small staff, indeed, some outdoor serving-men, and a couple of maids or so! You must have had a very small party last year."

"Till this year, sir, the Farm servants have always come up to the Holt on New Year's Eve; 'the more the merrier,' we used to say."

"On the principle that one fool makes many, I suppose; but how is it that the Farm servants are not joining with you now?"

"Really, sir, I should never have presumed—I didn't think; and I did just mention it to Miss Musgrave, on Sunday, coming out of church, and she said at once, 'Oh, no! not now, Mrs. Twentyman; it is quite another thing now that Mr. Thurston is at the Holt. Our servants will have their own amusements at home this year.' A very straightforward, sensible young lady is Miss Musgrave, sir."

"Indeed! let me see! she was one of the girls who came here on the evening of my arrival—not the blue-eyed little simpleton whom Lyulph tumbled over, eh?"

"Oh no, sir! that one was Miss Temple, a young lady from London. Miss Temple is considered very pretty, and, I am told, has scores of lovers in town, and could marry a nobleman any day she chose; but, to my thinking, she is not to compare with our Miss Anne, whom the Duchess was pleased to call 'the Rose of Chalfonts,' when she was last at Aldingham."

"Who are these Musgraves?"

"Indeed, sir, they come of a very good old family, a regular county family! The Musgraves of Fellshire are well known in these parts, and they are akin to the Musgraves of Eden Hall. You have heard about their famous goblet, and the 'Luck of Eden Hall?'"

"Oh yes! I know the story well; there is a German ballad about it, and Longfellow has done it into English very respectably. But these Musgraves seem to be farming people!"

"Well, sir, that is just what they are, in a worldly point of view; but they are something more than that. This

branch of the family lost its possessions in the time of the civil wars, I believe, and ever since they have been, as you say, farmers. They are not poor, quite the contrary, and Mr. James is the one to put the best foot foremost, though people do say he will ruin himself in the end; he is always 'making improvements,' as he calls them; always inventing something, or trying somebody else's invention. He is for all sorts of steam-kettles; he would have the cows milked by steam, if he could. He is always talking about economising 'POWER,' and the cost of manual labour; and the people about here, who are quiet, steady-going folk, not given to changes, and not fond of trying experiments, do not like it. He is a clever young man, though, there is no doubt of it; but deary me, sir, when he talks of keeping the tide out of the salt-marshes, and draining them, and cultivating them, I am half afraid he is going daft—like some geniuses do, you know, sir."

"Oh! so he is thinking of draining the marshes, is he He and I must have some talk; it is quite practicable."

"Oh! Mr. Thurston, you don't know these shores; you can no more keep the tide out than you can keep light out of the sky! What with the salt-marsh pools and bogs, the quicksands, and the treacherous tides, this is an awsome coast. There will be a great uprising in yonder bay when the day of judgment comes. Thousands are lying there, deep down no one knows where, drawn in by the dreadful quicksands. You see that island out there, near the estuary of the Leven! there used to be a chapel on it once, in the old time, when our Priory and Bekanks Abbey were in their glory, and a holy man lived in it, praying day and night for the souls of those who were passing out of this world at every rising of the tide."

"Oh! I dare say he had a jolly time of it, this monk of the lone island! Probably he did more carousing than praying;—but cannot the quicksands be avoided? is there

no chart of this infernal bay, with its creeks, and channels, and sandbanks, and other man-traps?"

"Plenty, sir; but as to mapping out the quicksands, one could never do it! You might put down where they were to-day, but to-morrow they would be somewhere else. Indeed, I have heard say that before your ink was dry they might have shifted; and I believe it, for deary me, I have seen the little channels of our own rivers change from place to place. I have known them one month to be in Fellshire, and the next in Luneshire, and sometimes they would go backwards and forwards with every spring tide. The only way to avoid the quicksands is to keep to the beaten tracks, especially to keep far away from any of the channels, and, above all, the great channel. I just told that same the other day to Miss Musgrave, when I was telling her what people said about her brother, and his new thrashing machine, and his outlandish manures, made *chemically*, I have heard; I said to her, 'Miss Anne, if you were to go down shore to Sandside, or perhaps to Kentsdale, it would behove you to keep to the regular path, that has been there time out of mind; if you tried to take short cuts, you would be pretty certain to find yourself in a quicksand, and quicksands are awkward things to get out of; and there are plenty of quicksands in life as well as in the estuary and the bay, and Mr. James had better take heed.'"

"I shall go down and talk to Mr. James Musgrave; I know a little of engineering."

"For Heaven's sake, sir, don't go and encourage him in his wild goose schemes. He will be wanting to drain the whole bay next, and turn it into corn-fields, from Rosswood Point to Fondrey Pile."

"Do his schemes annoy his mother and sister?"

"I cannot say they do, they have such confidence in him! They believe that he really sees further than other people, and they say they feel the force of his reasoning,

which the rest of the world cannot feel. Anyhow, they trust him implicitly, and believe that, in course of time, all he talks about will come to pass."

"Mrs. Twentyman! as you are not quite an old lady yet, you may live to see the marshes standing thick with crops, and a fine line of rail across the estuary and along the coast. We shall have a station at Cockleham, I hope."

Mrs. Twentyman shook her head. "Oh, sir! what did the Lord give us horses for, if we are to go flying about the land by steam?"

"If the Lord did give them, He intended them as a makeshift till man invented something better. You know when I first came here, you provided me with a tub for bathing, and I was thankful for it; but when my bath came from town, you were not so unreasonable as to insist on my keeping to the tub! though tubs are very useful, and I should say indispensable articles. Now horses, for purposes of general travel, are superseded by steam locomotives; nevertheless for draught, and short rides and drives, they are as valuable as ever. Not but what in a few years people may keep their balloon, instead of their carriage, and steam engines may be constructed to draw cabs and omnibuses; the real quadruped may be reserved for the race-course or the hunting-field. I suppose one could hardly go over hedge and ditch on a locomotive!"

Mrs. Twentyman looked very grave: she had an answer ready, but she would not presume. She was going to say something about tempting Providence, but remembering that her master generally ignored Providence, she wisely refrained from provoking him to utter what she felt to be almost blasphemous.

Mr. Thurston continued his inquiries. "Is this young man the master of the Holt Farm?"

"Yes, sir! I suppose if he married, Mrs. Musgrave and Miss Anne would go to live at Rose Cottage, a little

property they have over the Knoll yonder, almost in Chalfonts."

"Very well, Mrs. Twentyman, that will do! let the servants have all they want in moderation; but take care they do not become too noisy, and keep all the doors closely shut. And let me have some tea directly, and let it be stronger than it was last night—you cannot make it too strong for me."

And once again Gerard Thurston and the great hound were left to their own lucubrations. Lyulph, finding his master indisposed for conversation, indulged in a comfortable dream; and Mr. Thurston fetched from his chamber a large leather travelling-desk, and began to examine its contents. Some letters or papers he read, and carefully replaced, the darkest shadows gathering on his brow meanwhile; but several he glanced at and shuddered, then sternly read them through, then tore them in pieces, and tossed them behind the fire.

Then he began to soliloquize, this time not taking Lyulph into his confidence. The dog heard the deep, low voice, and looked up, and beat a tattoo with his great tail upon the hearth; but finding that he was not required to give his immediate attention, he stretched out his paws and his nose again to the comfortable glow, and composed himself to sleep once more. Gerard Thurston was saying to himself, "Fool! fool! twice fool! thrice fool! Are not women the curse of the Thurstons? and shall I, because a pair of honest-looking eyes crosses my path, concern myself about their owner? shall I, for the sake of a few earnest words, spoken in a clear, quiet voice, swerve from the line I marked out for myself, before I came back to this English country? And yet I *have* swerved! Did I not, like an infatuated idiot, show myself in that old Minster yonder, in which as a worshipper I had vowed never to show my face? Did I not feel that evening after talking with the girl, have I not felt ever since,

that there *may be* such a thing as truth and purity in the world? And yet I have always been deceived, as were my father, and his father, before me! '*My work*' she talked about. She spoke of it as gravely, as decidedly, as if it really remained for me to do. And then that question of hers, 'What do you suppose God gave you life for?' What, indeed! the older I grow, the more I wonder, till I come veritably to believe that which I have so often affirmed, that God had nothing to do with the matter; that my parents gave me life, according to the immutable laws of nature, and to them alone I owe this curse of existence, which I never asked for! Else, if God had given me life, surely He had concerned Himself more about me! She seemed posed herself when I suggested that thousands of people semed born only to be wretched; she acknowledged that I was propounding a question most difficult to answer, a problem that philosophers have never adequately solved; but there was great good sense in the reply she made—'Would it not be better to confine oneself simply to making the best of one's own life?'

"Then came another difficulty: What is '*the best?*' Who can say? But she had an answer for that question also. She affirmed that God would show us '*the best*' if we trusted in Him. Certainly he has never shown me any 'best;' but then I have never trusted in Him. I suppose people would not say that my experiences have been all *worst*, for I have plenty of the gold they worship so devoutly in this God-fearing British country, and I can count back my ancestors through many centuries—an advantage which patrician England never underrates! Yes! and I have redeemed my birthright, these desolate old halls of the Thurstons, and the more desolate acres of moss-land and marsh that environ them. I like the notion that young man has got into his head; I want something to do; why not drain the lands? There would indeed be

a fight between the human creature and the waves! but the very obstacles that are sure to be encountered only make the scheme more attractive. I must inquire about this projected railway, and I must see young Musgrave. By the way, I wonder how the Lady of the Mist will like the utilisation of her weird, barren realms! I have not forgotten that legendary ancestress of mine, nor the mythic chronicles concerning her, that were taught me in my childish days. Never mind her! of course she will be a plague, like all the rest of her sex, whether in the flesh or out of it! but we will deal with her, she will be managed more easily than the mermaids, who may be supposed to come up the channel with the great tides, floating themselves hither and thither at their own sweet will, right over the barriers and break-waters that ingenuity and industry have raised, just out of sheer feminine perversity! We might hope to keep the tide out, if there were only mermen in the sea, and no mermaids. We might bribe old Neptune to favour us, if there were no silver-footed Thetis to whisper in his ear. We might even propitiate Proteus himself, and win him over to our cause, were there no Nereides to play their wiles, and tempt us to our ruin! But James Musgrave I will see ere I am many days older, and I must make myself acquainted with the exact boundaries of my estates. I wonder if flotsam, and jetsam, and fishing-tolls come back to me as lord of Canonbury Holt? I have a great mind to send for Best, but I do not like the fellow, and I could not well bully him in my own house!"

Then Mr. Thurston continued his examination of the leather desk, his face gathering blackness as paper after paper was turned over. By the time he came to a morocco case, which was under everything else, he looked as if he had quarrelled with all the world, and defied it too; as if life were for him a dreary waste, a disappointment, a load which must be borne, but which

he had no idea of accommodating to his galled and weary shoulders.

Slowly, and as if about to contemplate some terrible object, he unfastened the clasp and threw back the lid of the miniature-case. Nothing apparently unpleasing presented itself to his fixed and gloomy gaze; on the smooth ivory was painted, with marvellous skill, the likeness of a very beautiful young woman, with smiling, rosy lips, deep violet eyes, gentle and yet arch in their expression; a brow of snow, cheeks just coloured as with the exquisite tinting of the hollow of some sea-shells; features of perfect regularity, most delicate and symmetrical in their outline, and masses of wavy golden hair, falling in wild curls and careless ripples around the graceful shoulders. It was indeed a lovely picture! the original, if the copy were faithful, must have been worthy of a place in Tennyson's "Dream of Fair Women." She might have sat for "Fair Rosamond." She might have been Queen Guinevere smiling on Sir Lancelot! But Gerard Thurston, as he looked sternly on the radiant face, only muttered to himself words of scorn—"Simple child! base traitress! miserable woman!" and even harder terms than these. But closing the case, he murmured more gently: "And yet, perhaps, she was not all to blame! I was a fool, I trusted blindly, and the tempter was at hand! Then I had no compassion! I sometimes think if I had held out my arms once, only once, she would have crept back to them again, like a sorrowing, repentant child. Poor Clarice! poor deceived, deluded Clarice! But what strange influence has made me breathe her name so pitifully? For the first time since that day, I begin to think that I also was to blame. Now, shall I run down to the farm and restore this brooch, or shall I send it by a trusty messenger? Which course is wiser, safer, *best*, as Anne herself would say? Because the past has been so dark, must the future wear no light? If there have been

earthquakes in the morning, may not the evening-tide be calm and mild? Must I, at forty-three, put from me all that makes life sweet, and bright, and soothing? Let me think seriously! No! I will not take the brooch, I will send it. I have said I will never trust a woman more!"

CHAPTER XI.

COCKLEHAM BAY.

It was the merriest Christmas-time that Chalfonts had known for many and many a year! All the country round about conspired to render honour to the Musgraves' guests, and everybody who had in any sort a right to do it, invited them to some kind of festive gathering, and the young ladies became very popular throughout the dale. The Redmayne girls, who had returned from Levensdale just before the shortest day, were especially delighted with Amy and Bertie, and strange to say, Clara the beauty attached herself chiefly to the sparkling, mischievous, clever Bertie, while the sage Jessie, who was reported to be almost as learned as the doctor himself, gave her heart to the lovely but lymphatic Amy. Twice or thrice every week during January and part of February, the Miss Redmaynes found their way to the farm, or Amy and Bertie, and sometimes Anne, were at the Rectory; not to speak of morning walks in the clear bracing air, scrambles on the shore, and skating on the shallow pools of Canonbury Moss. Even Amy grew venturesome, and deigned to wear the dainty little skates her cousin brought her from St. Ulpha's one market day; but when Clara, and Jessie, and Bertie, and Anne, and James, and Dr. Wilson, and even

the young matron, Mrs. Eliot, who had once been Annie Redmayne, took to sliding, Miss Temple felt that she must really "make a stand!" and she did stand for an hour or more, looking on with mild reproach, while the merry group executed wonderful glissades on the smooth, firm ice of the lonely moorland pool, till her nose was red and her cheeks were blue, and her teeth chattered in her head.

Nevertheless Amy Temple was no longer an invalid, and she did not pine for the delights of Kensington as her mother had predicted; she enjoyed the novelty of her country life, she liked the attention she received, and she never tired of describing to Clara and Jessie Redmayne the scenes of her last year's triumphs—still, there was one drawback; of all the presentable and unpresentable male creatures in and near Chalfonts, not one became her sole devoted vassal, not one cared for her supremely, not one made special demonstrations of regard! and Amy's was one of those characters which require for their full content and perfect happiness a host of beaux and a whole train of lovers paying senseless but assiduous homage at their shrine. Miss Temple's heart had never received any decided impression: or rather, as Bertie declared, it was made of such very yielding stuff, and received so many impressions with such marvellous rapidity that one invariably effaced the other, and confusion and chaos were the result, in those regions commonly designated the affections.

James was taken up with Bertie, there was no doubt of it now, and Amy's indignation, though roused fiercely at the onset, quickly passed away; only she told herself now and then, "it remained to see what papa and mamma would say about it! They had not educated Bertie to make dumplings and raised pies, or to physic cows, or to mend the Sunday-gloves of a man who disdained such coverings on the other six days of the week! James was

a thorough rustic—a person not to be shaken hands with in Regent Street, or to be acknowledged in Rotten Row!"

But there was a secret soreness in Amy's mind notwithstanding; she did not want James for herself, for she despised him in her quiet passive way, though quite convinced of his real, innate worth, so far at least as she could understand worth such as his; but she liked that every fish should have a nibble at her fly, whether she troubled herself or not to hook him and catch him in her net! And James was evidently hooked, and he had never even looked towards her fly, while he had pounced on Bertie's ere it skimmed the water! Bertie, with her snub nose and square chin, and no complexion. Bertie, with her fiery little temper, her independent spirit, her carelessness of etiquette, and her too *prononcée* ways. Bertie, whose only redeeming feature was a pair of lovely eyes, brown, liquid, lustrous, tender and modest, and yet sparkling with a wonderful vivacity! Yes! Bertie was surely on the point of being engaged, if the "powers that be" did not shake their heads, and fulminate a veto; and it would be too bad for Bertie to be married first. Amy quite appreciated Laban's scruple about giving away his younger daughter ere the elder one had wedded.

Then Dr. Wilson—a charming bachelor for forty—had not greatly affected her society, and Mr. Harry Littledale, the steward's brother, who came from Penmount to spend his Christmas holidays at Aldingham, had openly devoted himself to Clara Redmayne:—the curate at Grangeside was known to sigh all hopelessly for Anne, and Jessie Redmayne had quite a little shoal of black-coats following in her wake, half-a-dozen curates who came from north and south, and from east and west; who rushed about the country continually, to the tune of the old Border ballad, James Musgrave said:—

"From Argendale, and Kent-sand-side
Whose soil is sown with cockle-shells,
From Chalfonts eke, and Aldingham,
With fellows fierce from Bekank's Fells."

But no curate, whether fierce or mild, whether from the banks of classic Isis or fresh from the cloisters of St. Bega's, whether yearning for episcopal succession, or content to emulate the "wonderful Walker" of Seathwaite, paused to bestow more than ordinary courtesy on Miss Temple. The *belle* of Kensington was unappreciated in the wilds of Fellshire.

As for Mr. Thurston, he was only a degree better than his dog! Since Christmas-day he had come to church indeed, and he had chanted the Psalms in a grand ringing tenor voice, that had utterly ravished the doctor's soul, for music was the good man's weakness, and he would have compassed earth and heaven to secure a full choral service, and to be able to dispense with the nasal intonations of the respectable Mr. Crake. Now Mr. Thurston had proved himself incontestably "a bear!" He never looked at Amy in church, he never waylaid her in coming out; once he had trodden on the skirts of her flounced dress, and had rushed on, muttering something that might have been either an apology or an imprecation on the flowing costume; above all things he had never said a word in extenuation of Lyulph's ill-behaviour! He had introduced himself to James, and discussed the matter of the marsh-drainage very amicably, and he had returned by him the brooch that Anne had lost and sorrowed for, because it contained a lock of her father's hair, and had been given her by her mother on her twelfth birthday. No one knew anything about Gerard Thurston's soliloquy on New Year's Eve; and so far he adhered to the decision he had arrived at that night:—he would not—for reasons strong and manifold—concern himself about Anne Musgrave, and that quite as much for her own sake

as for his own. Anne herself had carefully eschewed the salt-marsh, whenever she was out on one of her solitary expeditions, nevertheless she felt deeply interested in the isolated melancholy man, whose sole friend was his dog, who had avowed his want of faith, almost his unbelief, in the providence of God. Anne shuddered as she reflected that perhaps his words implied something like real Atheism! But she felt sure that he had suffered much; that no light of love and home had ever shone around his childhood and youth; that his trust in his fellow creatures had early been betrayed; that he had been wronged, forsaken, his pride outraged, and his best feelings wounded! And gradually and without design Anne composed quite a little romance out of the unknown life she had rescued from destruction, the *dramatis personæ* being the hero himself, a faithless lady-love, a false friend, a cold, unfeeling father, and of course *Lyulph!* She never discussed him, as did Amy and Bertie and their friends at the Rectory; she did not even join in the conversations which Mrs. Redmayne sometimes carried on with Mrs. Musgrave concerning the remarkable man who had suddenly appeared in their midst, and was with them as a neighbour, but not of them!—though everybody congratulated themselves and each other upon the Squire's newly-developed phase of respectability in attending Divine service regularly on Sunday morning. "They might hope for him now," Mrs. Redmayne observed, "and he had proved himself to be neither Jew, Mohammedan, Papist, nor Methodist." She had even thought of calling upon him, for she greatly desired to be the first to ascertain beyond a doubt whether he were a bachelor, married man, or widower. Chalfonts generally believed in the final proposition; but then it unkindly credited him with having been the instrument of his wife's decease.

To none of this gossip did Anne or her mother incline, but they both privately wondered that the thorough un-

reserve and friendliness manifested on Christmas-eve had never led to any further intercourse; James being the only member of the family with whom the Squire had exchanged a syllable since the twilight walk across the marsh, although he had several times encountered the young ladies in their walks, when Lyulph had never failed to terrify Amy and to pay his court to Anne herself!

The February snows melted from the mountains; the streams were full, every tiny rivulet being swollen into a turbid, raging torrent; the mosses were sadly inundated, and the great marsh became a little sea, with crested waves breaking against the causeway. James and Gerard Thurston were there continually, and they explored the shore from Cockleham and Levens Point to Atterpile, and came to the conclusion that the drainage might be effected, though at an enormous expenditure of money and of toil, and above all of anxiety! Certainly those weird marsh-lands might become to future generations a rich source of profit; but in the meantime it was quite possible that the sluggish streams, and grim moss-bordered pools, and squashy bogs, *might* swallow up half a score of ordinary fortunes. If the Rothschilds and Miss Burdett Coutts conjointly set about it rashly, there was no knowing how poor they might find themselves as the result! The project promised wealth certainly; but then there might be an interlude of ruin, and the ruin would fall on the projectors and the wealth on the men and women of another century.

Notwithstanding all this, Gerard Thurston took up the scheme right manfully, and the more impossible it seemed the more determined he became to overcome all these impossibilities; he had made up his mind that where only rocks, and sand, and moss, and bog, and water were concerned, the word *impossible* should be ignored as unworthy of a place in his vocabulary!—if it had been men and women now—especially the latter—that had to

be managed or defeated, he would have fled the field at once; but inanimate nature was quite another thing, and sure to be conquered in the end!

One evening the two men with Lyulph had spent the afternoon on the causeway and among the dykes, crossed for the most part by light bridges that were renewed every year, after the mountain floods had subsided and the March tides were over; and they had wandered down the shore, past Grangeside to lonely Atterpile, and might have gone on, James said, no one knew how far,—watching the angry rushing-in of the spring-tide along the channel,—when it began to snow, and the evening rapidly to darken in. Mists rose from the yet uncovered sands, the wind howled drearily, drifts of cloud, black, jagged, and fantastically shaped, rose up from the sea, and a leaden gloom settled, as the twilight fell, on the Chalfonts hills and the more distant mountains. James and Gerard Thurston had a dreary walk before them, for as the flakes thickened and the vapours closed around more heavily, they found they must take the shore-road straight to Cockleham, and then across the moorland to Canonbury Holt: it would have been madness to have attempted the causeway in the fast increasing darkness, half blinded too, and frequently bewildered by the driving, sleety snow.

Little was said as they pressed onward through the storm; indeed, it was as much as they could do to keep their footing under the cliffs where there was no regular pathway, while ridges of sea-wrack, loose sand, and slippery shingle impeded their progress. And the wind shrieked and howled as if it were maniacally glad at their discomfiture, and the deep roar of the channel waters, rising every minute higher, and beating in with accelerated fury, was deafening as peals of thunder.

Suddenly James, the pioneer, stopped:—"Mr. Thurston, we ought surely to be at Cockleham ere this?"

"I was thinking the same thing myself; it seems to me

hours since we were at the Grangeside rocks ; and where is the usual light at Levens Point? And do the Cockleham people go to bed with the sunset, for I cannot perceive the faintest ray from the most flickering candle? And we must be near the fishing-huts."

"We cannot be far from them, and yet,—I never saw it so dark as this! How the waves do roar!"

"Musgrave! does the snow taste salt in these parts?"

"Not that I know of, but the shore vapours are always more or less impregnated with saline matter; you taste it on your lips."

"Something more than that! It was not snow or sleet that dashed up into my face just now, it was *spray*,—real *salt spray!* Musgrave, the sea water is close at hand!"

At that moment both of them stumbled, the ground was so yielding, and then a wave was sobbing at their feet, and a volume of undeniable spray dashed over them, drenching them completely. "We have wandered from the cliffs," was all that James said; "we are on the sands, among the creeks and inlets of the tide!" But the tone in which those few quiet words were uttered told Thurston what the peril was. To complete their dismay, Lyulph lay down and howled like a veritable banshee; but for the thunder of the waves, surely that prolonged dismal wail would have roused the fishermen of Cockleham. Then they heard a plunge; Lyulph was *swimming* very near them. Which way could they turn? They had quite lost their bearings, and knew not whether they faced the north or south, or east or west; they retreated as the surf came dashing round them, but the shore was so traversed by small creeks, which at low water were mere mud gutters, and at high tide deep rushing rivers, that to find *terra firma* again seemed to be impossible. Both James and Gerard knew that from half to full tide the shore of Cockleham Bay was so intersected by these tortuous and interlacing channels, that to leave the cliff-line

and venture beyond a certain reef of rock and shingle was a feat seldom attempted even by the fishermen. People who had been born in Cockleham had been drowned within sight of their own homes; there was but one safe path across the sands, one available ford at low tide, and it needed daylight and the lowest ebb to take it with security.

"What shall we do?" asked Gerard Thurston, hoarsely, as a fierce wave leaped above his knee.

"We are in God's hands," was James Musgrave's answer; "He only can deliver us from this dreadful peril: if it be His will, He can bring us safe through this; if not!"—and the young man's voice died away, for life was very sweet to him; he was full of vigour and energy; the future lay before him bright and fair, and full of promise, and Bertie's happy face seemed shining on him out of that terrible lone darkness! Yet he strove to say with cheerful heart, "Thy will, my God, be done!"

"Lead on, Lyulph!" cried Gerard; "home, Lyulph, home! Hie! good hound, take us home!"

Through one or two creeks where the water came up far above the knees, they followed the dog, who seemed to comprehend his master's order; then the water grew deeper and deeper, and the waves nearly threw them down, and then Gerard Thurston felt himself thrown upon something sharp and hard, and he felt, too, that his senses were deserting him, and his speech failing. He tried to call to his companion, but could not; the next minute the bitter wave was at his lips! He thought he heard a shout, but he seemed to be falling asleep, and then all was silent, and he knew that he was drifting away to a land all strange and unexplored.

CHAPTER XII.

WANTED A GOVERNESS.

"EMILIA! it seems to me that the girls are really running wild! Georgy is lying on the hearth-rug in the breakfast-room, pretending to read '*Dombey;*' she has been there the whole morning: Hilda appears to be missing altogether, and I have just discovered Juliet gossiping in one of the bedrooms with that pert, flaunting new housemaid who came last week! This must not go on, my dear; the children will be ruined."

The speaker was Mr. Temple, who with an anxious, not to say displeased countenance, had invaded the morning-room where his wife sat, alternately dreaming over a library volume, and taking a few stitches in a square of canvas, one corner of which displayed a splendid arabesque in bright-coloured wools, floss-silk, and glittering steel beads. She raised her sleepy blue eyes when her husband had concluded his remarks, and simply replied, —"Yes, I think they will!"

"Cannot such a catastrophe be averted?" he asked drily.

"They should be sent to school, but they all declare they will not go! And really that last governess was a total failure. They did exactly as they chose, and learned only what they liked! I am sure I was very sorry for that poor Miss Maunder, they led her such a life! only it was very wrong of her to come troubling me with complaints; I got quite nervous at last, whenever I heard her say she wished to speak to me;—she ought to have been able to manage them of herself, else what do we pay governesses for, I should like to know?"

"We pay them for the *assistance* they render us in the education of our children: we do not, or ought not to

expect a governess, however competent, to take the whole onerous duty on herself; nothing can release the parents from their responsibility. But I must confess that Miss Maunder was but a very wishy-washy specimen of the genus governess, and it was better for her sake as well as for ours that she should leave us. However, governesses are by no means difficult to procure; why have you not engaged another?"

"*I* engaged another?" and Mrs. Temple looked up in mild wonder and querulous dismay. "Papa! how can you be so unreasonable? What do I know about securing governesses? I heard of the last by chance, you know, and you say she was a failure! Why don't *you* see about it?"

"My dear, I did not wish to interfere with your prerogatives. Certainly, mothers in general claim to be allowed to select the instructresses of their daughters, subject, of course, to their husbands' approval. In all such matters I wish you to consult me, but I do not care to take the initiative. Now, will you look after a governess *at once?*"

"I am sure I do not know where to look; I did ask Mrs. Torrens and Mrs. Mitchell, and they assured me a really efficient governess, who would not presume, was as difficult to find as a cook who knew her work, and would not filch or waste."

"Then where do you imagine I should look?"

"Oh! you could look in a thousand places, you know so many people, and you are a literary man; and all the world knows literary men have more resources than other people!"

"They need have, especially if they are blessed with wives who have no resources."

"Now you are going to be unkind!" And the blue eyes swam with tears, and the short upper lip, still beautifully curved and rosy, began to tremble. "You knew, when you married me, that I was not a strong-minded

woman! I told you that I must have some one to depend upon! I have not that energy or strength that you and Bertie have; I should not like to have it. I told you that I should never be equal to—what's its name—I suppose I mean emergencies! How should I, with my delicate health and constitutional languor, brought up too, as I had been, never to pick up a thing I dropped, or walk across the room, if a servant could do it for me? And I never deceived you; why did you marry me? I wish you hadn't! And now you taunt me with—with my—I don't know what they are—for they are not failings nor weaknesses, but to you they are shortcomings! I know you wish I were dead, and I wish I were, for I don't want to bother you; and then you could marry a woman after your own heart—a great, tall authoress, with heaps of sense, and no end of capabilities, and a loud voice;—one who would get up early in the morning, and rule the house, and make the girls afraid of her, and talk learnedly when you have your literary evenings! I dare say—indeed I am *sure*—you would marry that Mrs. Snagger, who writes about ethnology, psychology, and other stupid clever things. I know you like her, because she has so much *energy*—one of your cardinal virtues! but she is not pretty, nor gentle, nor accomplished, and she would soon worry my poor Amy and my darling Georgy into their graves; the others might do, they have so much of your spirit in them. But it's hard to think you wish me out of the way, and all for that Mrs. Snagger, and——"

"Emilia! do you know you are talking very foolishly and very wickedly? You do not believe all you say; if you did—if you really could do your husband so great an injustice—you would deserve to have the vision of Mrs. Snagger, as your successor, constantly before your eyes. Now let us talk *sense*;—a governess must be found, and that before another week has passed. The girls have been idle and uncontrolled quite long enough."

"I am sure I do not know where to go to find a governess. I suppose the register-office would not do. And Mrs. Torrens says——"

"Why not advertise as other people do?"

"And who would see the young persons, and answer all the letters? Mrs. Torrens' sister's sister-in-law advertised, and she had more than a hundred answers! You know I never could write letters! Why not select a school at Brighton, or at Boulogne?"

"I choose to keep my daughters at home; you know I do not approve of girls being herded together at a boarding-school! What answer did you have to that advertisement I pointed out the other day? I thought the lady might have suited us."

"I did not write;—I meant to, I believe, but I put it off till next day; then I forgot till it was too late for the country post, and then I thought it would be of no use, some one else would have engaged her. And even you admit that one need not take trouble for nothing."

"I suppose there is nothing in to-day's paper that would do for us?"

"I have not looked at the supplement; indeed, I have not read the paper at all: I was so tired after I had spoken to cook!"

"Give it to me:—plenty of ladies wishing situations, as usual, but I do not much like the tone of their advertisements. Here is one in decidedly bad English! Here is a lady who sings her own praises so loudly that I am sure she must be lacking in the matter of testimonials; and here is another who desires that no tradesman will apply! Ah! what is this? 'An English Protestant lady, lately returned from France, desires a situation as finishing governess. She has lived for many years on the Continent; teaches German and Italian, drawing, &c., &c. References offered both in Paris and in London'—My dear, this is worth attending to."

"Yes! I think it is: you had better write to her."

"No! you must write, and appoint an interview: what is the address? 'Sussex Terrace, Sussex Road, Walworth.' Now, my dear Emilia, just get out your note-case, and do it at once."

"I really cannot manage it this morning; I will do it after luncheon."

"You will do it now, please! After luncheon it will be postponed till the evening, and in the evening you will be too tired, and leave it till to-morrow morning, and so the whole business will slip through." And Mr. Temple brought his wife's paper-case, looked out her gold pen, and replenished the inkstand—she had merely to draw up to the table, and write the necessary words. But she paused,—"You may as well do it yourself, Mr. Temple: you can write ten letters while I write one; besides, what am I to say?"

"I will tell you what to say, but I will not write the note. Such duties fall naturally within your province, Emilia, and I will not intrude upon them. I do not wish to have it believed that my wife is a nonentity, that I am mistress as well as master. Now my dear, rouse yourself, and tell this *Madame G*—— to call upon you at any hour you may choose to name. I shall see her of course, but it is you who must make the appointment;" and finding that there was really no appeal from this decree, Mrs. Temple took a tiny sheet of scented note-paper, and without much difficulty, and in a pretty, flowing, but rather feeble hand, requested Madame G——, of Sussex Terrace, Sussex Road, if not already engaged, to call at Tylney House, &c., &c., at the hour of four on the following afternoon. Finally, Mrs. Temple folded her small scented missive into a small and scented envelope, and felt that she had done virtuously and deserved commendation. At the same time she wished the interview were over, and Madame G—— engaged and regularly installed in the schoolroom; for

Georgy's laziness, and Hilda's naughtiness, and Juliet's tendencies to chattering with the maids, were certainly becoming standing grievances, "though," as Mrs. Temple soliloquised, "it was all Mr. Temple's fault for sending the elder girls away! Bertie always had so much control over Hilda, and she hunted Georgy up from the impromptu siestas she would take at every opportunity, and Juliet dared not go to the servants if Bertie were anywhere about." Clearly Bertie was a person of some account in her mother's estimation, though Mrs. Temple made her moan so often over her second daughter's rough, impetuous ways and startling speeches, and her general want of that attribute which she had herself cultivated with so much success;—that is to say—*repose!* For "repose" in word, and deed, and thought, at home and abroad, at all times, and under every circumstance, was the idol of her idolatry. "If mamma could be enthusiastic," Bertie used to say, "it would be on the subject of 'repose.'" And Hilda, the thirteen-year-old termagant, who had nearly tormented the life out of poor, conscientious, incapable Miss Maunder, and who was amenable to no authority save her father's, to no influence but her sister Bertie's, one day remarked that she was sure her mamma's peculiarly undemonstrative temperament was the result of a defect in her education, they must have taught her to conjugate verbs only in the passive voice, and in the neuter form; the *active* verbs being altogether omitted in her course of English or other grammar! Bertie scolded the little saucebox emphatically, but, nevertheless, she was internally amused. Active verbs and Mrs. Temple certainly had not much in common! At four o'clock the next day, Hilda established herself in the drawing-room, that she might "hear and see all about it," as she privately told the sleepy Georgy, who was inclined to cry at the idea of a new governess, who would make her do lessons in the afternoon! "Also," said Miss Hilda, tossing back

her crisp brown curls, and turning up her snub little nose, which was an exaggeration of Bertie's *piquante*, much admired *nez-retroussé*, "I shall take stock of her, Georgy. I shall see what Madame is made of: the first day I saw Miss Maunder I knew that I should be compelled to victimise her. You don't understand the science of quietly bringing a governess *under*, Georgy!"

"I do not want to bring anybody under, for I don't like being under myself, unless the person over me is very kind and nice," said Georgy, mournfully; "I only want to be let alone! Papa told me this morning I must have at least two years more of lessons and governesses; it is very hard, I am fifteen now and more, and Bertie was out of the schoolroom three months after she was sixteen. I don't see the use of learning so much!"

"Georgy! you are a horrible dunce, you know you are! Didn't you confuse Oliver Cromwell with the Pretender, only yesterday? Did not you declare that William Tell was only a person in a story? Do you know a single irregular French verb properly, or could you do a page of '*Das Kalte Herz*' without the dictionary?"

"I don't care! Amy does not know much more, and she does very well. Every one admires her; if you look pretty, nobody wants to know how much you have learned, and it is very easy to look pretty."

"Yes, it will be easy enough to you, for you will be pretty, Georgy; but pretty people should not be dumb, and yet if they are dunces they are sure to make blunders directly they begin to talk."

"I don't want to talk, it is so much trouble."

"Ah! well! if you are going to play the part of *La Belle Muette!* But I must go, it is almost four o'clock, and I want to notice how Madame G—— comes into the room. I shall know directly how much spirit she has in her, and whether I shall have a long fight or a short one for my own dear way. It is in little things and unimpor-

tant words that people reveal themselves, much more than in set speeches and got-up conversations, Bertie says so!" And accordingly Miss Hilda seated herself on an ottoman, at the further end of the drawing-room, precisely ten minutes before four, but precisely at five minutes to the hour Mr. Temple came in from his study, and finding the young lady at her self-appointed post, desired her to withdraw. She immediately obeyed, though not with the best grace imaginable, for she was very angry, and indignant at being "treated like a child." But she knew that her father's word was law, especially when he spoke in that calm, grave, decided way, and she did not hesitate, but rose and left the room without the slightest parley, flouncing her short skirts around her as she went, and slamming the door behind her, to the serious discomposure of both parents; for Mr. Temple, like many others devoted to sedentary occupation, was himself a nervous subject. He appreciated to the full energy, decision, promptness in action, and other attributes of a like character, but real *brusquerie*, and violence, and all sudden noises were his detestation. Had Hilda received the command from her mamma, she would have remonstrated, and argued, and declaimed, till for very peace's sake she would have been permitted to remain.

Precisely at four, Madame Gerard was announced. In the advertisement she had given only her initials. She was a small, elegantly-formed woman, and she had evidently been a beauty in her day. She was fair as Mrs. Temple herself, but the delicate damask bloom was absent from her cheeks, which were sunken, instead of being dimpled and rounded, like those of the more prosperous matron. Her hair was thin, and decidedly *blonde cendrée*, yet when the light flashed across it it showed a golden gleam. Her features were absolutely faultless, but the set and almost stern expression of her face hid their loveliness as with a mask. Her eyes were blue but lustreless, and

Mr. Temple noticed the symmetry of the small gloved hands she rested on her muff. As for age, she might have been anything between thirty and fifty, but without being asked she told them she was thirty-two. Mrs. Temple immediately decided that she had mulct herself in at least a dozen years; it was that fair matron's *specialité* never to believe in other people's youth, though extremely vain of her own preservation of good looks, and also extremely tenacious of a certain reputation of being still as young as Amy's mother naturally could be.

Madame Gerard, in a slow and measured but musical voice, and in pure English, with a slightly foreign accent, volunteered all the information that the pair before her could desire. She was the daughter of English parents, and born in England, but at an early age being left an orphan she was adopted by a great aunt who lived in Paris, a woman of strict, almost ascetic principles, but an uncompromising Protestant. Madame *la Tante* having but a very moderate income, which died with her, educated the young girl for a governess; and at the age of eighteen, having been thirteen years in Paris, she obtained a situation in the family of an English gentleman, and accompanied her pupils and their parents to Italy, and afterwards to Switzerland, where they remained several years. Finally, she took a second situation, her services being no longer required by her first employers, and soon afterwards she married.

Here there was a pause in the narrative, which had so far flowed easily enough, but now there was a sort of reserve and show of reticence, as if she wished not to speak more than was essential of this portion of her history. Mr. Temple divined at once that there were certain painful passages in Madame's married life; either her marriage had not been satisfactory, or else the great grief of widowhood had fallen overwhelmingly upon her—and Mr. Temple's kind heart fettered his tongue—he was

always a coward at the thought of giving pain, and there was something at once so self-controlled and so desolate in Madame Gerard's aspect that he could not bear to hazard inquiries, which might touch a bleeding wound. She was in mourning, or rather in black, very shabby black, too, Mrs. Temple thought, but there was nothing about her which could be considered as a compromise for the widow's garb of woe. Still questions must be asked —"only," Mr. Temple began to cogitate, "could they not be put and answered through the references? It seemed impertinent to catechise a gentlewoman as if she were a maid of all work! and yet——"

Mrs. Temple, however, was troubled with no such qualms of delicacy, and she relieved her husband forthwith from his dilemma; for in her usual placid tone she straightforwardly inquired, "Have you lost your husband?"

The answer was as definite as the question: "I have lost my husband!" The words were spoken in a dull, hard tone, that betrayed to one of her auditors, and only one, the suffering they caused her.

"How long ago?"

"Almost seven years."

"You have had time to get over it!"

"I have."

"Have you any children?"

"No! not any."

"Had you never any family?"

"I had one little child, and it died."

"Was Monsieur Gerard a Frenchman?"

Madame bowed, her words were evidently failing her. To relieve her, Mr. Temple plunged into the subject of salary and duties, and thankfully, as it seemed to him, she turned from the investigation of her private concerns to the discussion of what she could and what she could not teach. And this theme she entered upon with spirit, and

showed herself entirely competent to the task she had undertaken; even Mrs. Temple was impressed with a certain *savoir faire* in all she said, either spontaneously or in reply to certain interrogations which Mr. Temple knew very well how to put. As to references, they were all that could be desired, at once numerous and reliable; and, accordingly, a few days after this interview, Mr. Temple having communicated with a well-known French pastor in Paris, and with a highly respectable family in the neighbourhood of London, Madame Gerard was installed as governess in the school-room of Tylney House; and the lazy Georgy, the turbulent Hilda, and the chatterbox Juliet, were formally consigned to her care with injunctions on the part of their papa to enforce obedience in all things, and to make them clever, energetic, and industrious women; on the part of their mamma, not to overburden Georgy, nor try Hilda's temper, nor repress Juliet unduly! above all things, to attend to their manners, and inculcate "*repose*" in all their speech and movements!

So Madame Gerard became Mrs. Temple's governess, and it promised to be a tolerably satisfactory engagement on both sides. A week or so after her arrival, Mr. Temple explained that he should wish his daughter Bertie to read French and German occasionally with Madame, on her return from Chalfonts. And at this intimation, so singular an expression flitted over the governess's pale face, that he felt annoyed, if not displeased. It was scarcely to be called an *expression* that he noticed, it was more like a shadow; but ere he could decipher what it meant it was gone, as if it had not been! He concluded that Madame did not like any addition to her pupils, especially in the shape of a lively grown-up girl; but he had quite intended to make some kind of present, by way of recompense for extra labour, and he felt vexed and disappointed.

The next minute Madame replied that she should be

happy to read with Miss Bertie as often as she wished, and she said it so frankly and so naturally that Mr. Temple believed he had been mistaken. She had been suffering from neuralgic toothache all the morning, probably a spasm of pain had caused the momentary change of countenance. And Georgy grew quite diligent and animated, Hilda was subdued, and Juliet was taught to limit her powers of conversation; and Madame Gerard held her own in the Temple schoolroom.

CHAPTER XIII.

COCKLERS AND FLOOKERS.

MR. THURSTON was right when he fancied he heard a shout; but James Musgrave was certain that a human voice was mingling itself with the roar of the elements, and with Lyulph's howling bark. He strained his eyes through the thick black darkness, but no friendly gleam shone out upon the sands, or sparkled ever so faintly from the shore: far and near, above and below, all was awful, impenetrable gloom. He had lost his companion, and Lyulph's wail and bay grew every moment less distinct. If Musgrave had his face, as he believed it was, to the coast, then Thurston must be wandering or floating away quite out to sea.

But that voice!—it certainly was a voice, and that not very distant! and, again he listened, and again he peered about him, hoping to discern some outline, or some shadow that might give him an idea of his situation. He heard only the raging of the waves all around him, and their dash upon the rocks sounded like the triumph of a cruel enemy, while the blinding sleet came fiercely in his

face, and added to the difficulties of the hour. He stopped, and waited till there was a slight momentary lull in the wind, and something like a hush in the thunder of the tide; then he too shouted with all the force of his lungs, and to his great joy he was answered. Relief was at hand, help was near; but would the relief ever reach him, would the help ever be available? Again he shouted, and again he was answered, and this time he heard words:—"For God's sake, man, who are ye, and whar are ye ganging to?"

"I am James Musgrave, and I am ganging to another world, if I cannot find my way ashore!"

"O Lord! it is t' maister himsel'," roared the other voice. "Lord, ha' mercy on him! what garred the puir body gang amang t' creeks and channels, and t' quicksands all aboot? Wait, maister, till I coom t'ye; if ye git your foot upon the Big-Slack-Sands ye are dune for, and ye are vary near them! ane step and ye are in Slack Pool, and naebody e'er winned out o' that I'se thinkin."

James did not recognise the voice, though it called him "maister." The fact was, it belonged to an amphibious creature, one of the cocklers and flookers by trade, who had gathered sea-wrack for him in the preceding summer, when he was trying kelp-experiments with certain lands. James had been kind to this man, and Anne had visited his wife, when, after the fashion of the Cockleham fishers' wives, she had twins, having only provided scanty raiment for one wee bairn, and Humphrey Rigg determined that he would save "t' maister," at the risk of his own life:—"if aebody could do it he could, for didn't he know the *skeers*" (or cockle-beds) "better than a' t' folk, and hadn't he his *craam*" (a kind of bent three-pronged fork, with which the cockler cleverly whips out the fish) "reet in hand to help him on?" In telling the tale afterwards, he used to say:—"and so I joost lifted oop my heart to *Him* as is abuve, and asket *Him* to tak me straight aheead, to

where t' puir maister was, for t' darkness o' that neet were like t' darkness as t' Lord sended to that wicked king o' Egypt, as wud na' let t' peoples gang awa' to t' land o' milk an' honey!—a grit and awsome darkness that might be feelit! Likewise, t' waves and t' winds made dreadful roarings, like maad bulls o' Bashan I reckon! on'y I niver saw or heerd ony bulls but t' bulls of Fellshire and Luneshire, and mayhap they dinna roar sae loud as them o' Bashan! But thinks I—the gude Lord hears for a' t' clatter, and He sees through t' black and clarty neet, and if He ganged Hisself upon the sea, maybe He'll let me gang amang t' creeks and 't channels, and na' jist be droonded! Sae I clinched my *craam* unco' fast, and felt my way, and I halloed agin, and t' maister he halloed back a gude 'un, and I gev a staart, for the shout were jist at my elbow; and in twa minnits I had him in my grip, and I could ha' grat oot like a bairn, my heart were a' sae glad!"

And now by the side of that stalwart fisher, who knew every inch of his ground, and with that mighty grip upon his shoulder, James Musgrave was comparatively safe. And not too soon was help afforded, for his strength was failing fast, his head was dizzy, and his knees were trembling, quite as much with cold as with exhaustion. Indeed a fearful numbness was fast stealing over his whole body, his senses were getting bewildered, and had he gone a few steps further in the direction he had taken, he would have plunged into the morass known as Big-Slack-Sand, whence he never would have emerged in the darkness, and the state of the tide rising rapidly and strongly and not far off high water. Even in broad daylight and when the tide was out the fishermen gave the terrible quicksand a wide berth, and the deep pool beyond it, formed by the sudden widening of a tiny creek, was dreaded by them, and cautiously avoided.

But James's first thought was for Mr. Thurston; where

was he? what had become of Lyulph, who had now ceased to give tongue? Had master and hound been swept away by the resistless waves, or had they been swallowed up alive in the quicksands of the channel? He rapidly explained to Humphrey Rigg how matters stood, but the cockler seemed to think that it would be in vain to seek for Mr. Thurston; the tide was still rising, and in a few minutes the creek which lay between them and the shore would cease to be fordable; they would only jeopardise their own lives, and certainly not save his. But Musgrave was firm, and refused to take any measures for his own security till at least an effort had been made to aid the master of Canonbury Holt. Humphrey quietly told him that to wander about in the darkness was sheer folly, and only tempting Providence. They might grope about till morning dawn, and fail to find him, but only by a miracle could they escape being drowned, or swallowed up themselves, long before the clock tolled out the hour of midnight. Besides, there were boats on the beach, flat-bottomed boats, that would ride upon the shallowest waters, and be safe in deep ones too, if only they kept out of the great channel; and they could go about the creeks, —Humphrey knew them very well,—if only there was the least glimmering of light; and it had ceased to snow, and the clouds were parting, for one or two dim stars shone out through rifts in the great darkness overhead. Come what would they must go ashore at once, and get help, and several boats—that the chances of saving Mr. Thurston might be multiplied: also they must hang out lights in Cockleham on a peculiar and primitive system of their own.

James Musgrave could not but own that the cockler had good sense on his side. In order to save Mr. Thurston, they first must save themselves, and every minute they stayed where they were added to their own peril, and increased their difficulties. Yes! Humphrey was right,

the boats were the only hope; only as James followed his guide, through the surging waters, holding one end of the *craam*, he felt as if he were deserting his friend, and leaving him to perish in the storm. Then he shuddered to think how long a time had elapsed since last they spoke together;—if Thurston had wandered away into one of the deep, strong currents, he must be already past all human aid. Even if he were a good swimmer, it would be of little use; it might protract the final struggle, that was all! for who could swim against a furious, wild tide, coming in, eger-like, a watery wall, four feet in height, with all around black, impenetrable darkness, the waves as cold as icy death, and the sands themselves, even in broad daylight, as treacherous and fatal as any in the country? Certainly, not one who knew nothing of the shore, nothing of the uncertain currents, nothing of the pools, reported to be bottomless,—that made such bright lagoons at low water, when the sun was dancing on their rippling surface.

Very soon James and the cockler were standing safe upon the rocky beach, above high-water mark, and it did not take long to rouse the cottagers, who came out in swarms, and volunteered to man the boats; but all seemed to think it a very hopeless quest; putting off into that deep blackness seemed indeed like plunging into dreary and illimitable space. Even as they pushed away, two bonfires were being lighted by the women, so that there would be no difficulty in rowing back to the shore, in case of rescue, or when they felt that all their efforts were in vain.

"Whist! whist!" cried one of the men, resting on his oars, "that's t' big dog's howl! it comes wi' t' wind; we maun row that way, Steevie!"

Again and again, across the soughing waves, came Lyulph's signals of distress. Now it was a piteous whine, now a wail, now a fierce, loud bark, and now a deep, low

bay, such as he uttered when he sprang upon his foes, whether quadrupeds or bipeds, that met the ears of the eager, anxious listeners. And they were certainly nearing him, for they rowed rapidly in the direction whence the sound proceeded, and every bark and howl was louder than the last.

"Good hound!" cried James Musgrave; "wherever he is, his master is sure to be, so we may save him yet; a little more to the east, I think, Humphrey!" Then he called "Lyulph!" and presently the huge beast came swimming slowly through the water, and he went straight to that end of the boat where Musgrave was sitting, and put his cold nose into the young man's hand, and made a piteous moan, that to all present was as eloquent as words.

The clouds had cleared away now, the stars were shining brilliantly, and a crescent moon was just dipping below the western horizon; it was light enough to see the coast-line, and the man could plainly discern the form of Lyulph, as, turning tail, he swam or waded solemnly towards a certain point. Of course they followed him, and James shouted out that help was coming, but there was no response; all was silence, save the roaring of the water, and the wild shrieks of the fitful wind. Presently the boat was aground, and the man called Steevie cried:—"We're on t' Abbot's Bank: it be always shallow water here, even at full tide: there's a rock yon that's niver covered till t' last quarter of an hour, and it's a bare agin, when the tide's been turned another quarter. Excep' when there's grand aiquinox tides, it's niver covered for more than thirty minutes out o' t' haill four and twenty hours! I'll jist get out; the water is na' deep: that's reet, ma gude doggie—lead the way!"

And Lyulph led them to the rock in question—the rock which was so seldom covered, but which was now being only submerged. The hound had evidently dragged

his master from the water, and, with the instinct of his species, had sought the highest ground; and there, with spray and rising waves dashing over him, lay, as they feared, the lifeless body of Gerard Thurston. It—they never thought of saying *he*—was brought into the boat, and carried to the land with all despatch; and Lyulph, who had been content before to swim near James Musgrave, now insisted upon leaping in and lying at his master's side. It was very clear that, living or dead, that lonely man had one staunch friend, who never would desert him. But James soon discovered that the heart was still beating, and he poured some whiskey between his friend's lips, and ascertained that a few drops were swallowed. He had imbibed a dose of the useful but much-abused alcohol himself, while the boats were getting ready; and Humphrey's wife had filled his flask in case of any emergency, ere they put off from the shore. The fishermen of Cockleham generally kept a little "strang liquor" among their stores, and, it must be confessed that, though it too often came from an illicit still, it was seldom put to any illicit purpose. Drinking to excess is not the vice of cocklers and flookers, nor even of miners in that part of the world. Muddy hot coffee is their chief beverage, and, as a treat, the commonest of table-beer, of which it would be impossible to swill to intoxication. Spirits are generally kept for sickness, or for cases like the one before us; and on that dangerous shore, twenty-five years ago, they by no means occurred unfrequently. The railway which now runs from Keermouth Junction, through St. Ulpha's to Bekanks Abbey—where there is a grand hotel for the accommodation of tourists—and to the rising town of Garrow beyond, has brought about another state of things; and, though still the treacherous tide will sometimes steal a march upon unhappy wanderers, who get entangled among the winding creeks, which can be skipped over by a child at a low state of

the tide, but which rise in a few minutes to deep raging channels at a certain period of the flow; and, though still the awful quicksands claim now and then their victims, yet such tragedies are few and far between—that is, compared with former days; for seldom does a whole year pass by without one or more persons being lost upon those fatal sands.

By the time they reached the shore James was greatly comforted; for Thurston had moved, though he had not spoken, and the pulse, which had seemed almost gone, was now perceptible. A few minutes more, and all the party were under the roof of Humphrey Rigg; and then it was discovered that Gerard Thurston's head and the upper portion of his clothes were wet with something more than the sea-water and the melted snow. Blood had flowed freely, and it was even now oozing in a dark, trickling stream, from a deep wound nearly on the temple; and there were other contusions, which showed that he had been flung head-foremost upon a rock, or, it might be, on the stakes belonging to the nets of the flookers, which were set across more than one of the broader channels of that shore. But his hands were cut besides, and all assembled believed that the angry tide had flung him upon some sharp piece of rock—not the one on which Lyulph had landed him, certainly; for the water only lapped round that till it was near the height, and the dog would doubtless have been very careful and tender of his burden. He sat now at his master's feet, looking half drowned himself, and thoroughly exhausted, but every now and then uttering a low cry, and glancing wistfully from the prostrate form he loved so well to the faces of the men around. That they were friendly faces he knew full well, or he would have risen up, panting and wave-beaten as he was, and have proved himself more than a match for the best man there—and they were stalwart, burly fellows, those fishermen of Cockleham, though they seldom tasted

meat, and refreshed themselves, for the most part, on buttermilk and coffee. While they were examining Mr. Thurston's hurts, and wondering what would be the best mode of treatment in his case, James, who saw the wound, was afraid of again administering the whiskey, and was inquiring who would take a horse and go up to Chalfonts in quest of Dr. Wilson—a lumbering sound, as of a four-wheeled vehicle was heard without, and directly afterwards the worthy doctor himself came into the hut, inquiring what had happened, and who were the sufferers.

He had been visiting a patient on Canonbury Moss, and he had seen the beacon-fires kindled on the shore, and full well he understood the meaning of their lurid light. He immediately drove towards Cockleham, and the first person he met told him that some people had been tide-belated on the sands, that a man was missing, that the flat boats were out, and that the fishing village, which had for the most part retired to rest—for Cockleham sometimes went to bed with the sun, even in the winter—was all astir and in confusion. "And ye'd better gang-doun, doctor; they'll be speering after ye, I guess," was the winding-up of the narrator's tale. Little did Dr. Wilson guess who were the persons that might be needing his good offices.

But he told his man to drive down into Cockleham with all speed; and great was the relief and thankfulness of James Musgrave when the well-known face appeared on the threshold of Humphrey's cottage.

"Will it be possible to take him home?" asked Mr. Musgrave.

"Yes; if it is done immediately. To-morrow morning we could not move him without risking his life; there will be high fever, and, I dare say, inflammation to contend with. But, man, you look like a ghost yourself!"

"No wonder! I have been in the water, though not under it, for a long time! But never mind me. I am in

no danger. I shall be the worse for it for a few hours, I dare say, that will be all. I can bear a good wetting, especially in salt water."

Dr. Wilson bound up Mr. Thurston's head, and satisfied himself that no bones were broken, though the number and severity of the bruises disclosed by the examination rather startled him; but it only made him the more anxious to get him home, the fisherman's hut being sadly wanting in the commonest conveniences. So Mr. Thurston, still unconscious, was lifted into the doctor's carriage, which you must not suppose was an orthodox professional brougham, for it was a queer kind of vehicle, very useful, but not ornamental—a sort of cross between a tilt-cart and what is now called a private omnibus, with a general air of a bathing-machine about it. It was calculated to hold four people, and it jolted all it held most horribly.

It jolted so much now, toiling up the rocky hill, and bumping down short declivities, only to take a longer climb, that Mr. Thurston first began to moan, and then to groan, and then to talk wildly in an unknown tongue: the good doctor was seriously concerned, for the Holt was still afar off, and the road to it was not of the best, even for Fellshire, where level highways are a luxury unknown.

"We must land him at the farm," said James, "we cannot take him on in this state."

"Yes, yes!" said the doctor eagerly, running his fingers through his hair, his regular habit when relieved in mind: "it is the best thing we can do."

CHAPTER XIV.

BY THE KITCHEN FIRE.

JAMES met Anne in the doorway; she was coming out to see if there were any signs of his approach, for all at the farm had begun to be uneasy, as the hour was getting late, and the master, as a rule, was so singularly punctual. Moreover, the men had come in, saying the Cockleham beacons were blazing away, so that they knew something untoward was happening in the bay; either some fishing-boat was in distress, or else some one lost, or "tided-up" among the quicksands. Anne naturally started and turned pale when she saw her brother's white haggard face and his drenched garments, over which he had thrown a rough pilot coat, belonging to one of the cocklers; but she quickly recovered her composure, and simply saying, "You have been in the water, James; come directly to the fire, and I will look you out dry clothes," she laid her hand upon his arm, and was drawing him into the kitchen, where a huge blazing peat fire was just in all its glory, when something peculiar in his look again startled her, and she relinquished her hold of him and clasped her hands, and said, "What is it, James? Is anybody drowned, anybody lost?"

Lost is a word of peculiar and sad significance in that neighbourhood.

"Thurston has been very nearly lost, Anne; he is so ill that the doctor says we must not take him on to the Holt to-night; so of course I have brought him here. Go in and tell your mother while I have him carried to my room."

"He is not ——"

"No, he is not dead, but seriously injured, I am afraid. Go, Anne dear, tell mother and Bertie quietly, and try to prevent Amy from falling into hysterics if you can. Then send a message up to Mrs. Twentyman."

Anne fulfilled her mission satisfactorily, and Mrs. Musgrave was as little "put about" as any mistress of a house could be, a half-drowned man having been just brought to her door. She did not know how great had been the peril to which her own son had been exposed; it did not at the moment occur to her that James and Mr. Thurston had been together, and that the same danger must probably have menaced both. But it flashed across Bertie's mind at once, and directly her aunt had left the room, bent on hospitable care and motherly kindness towards the stranger within her gates, she sprang up and caught Anne in her arms, a way she had when she wanted to extract summary information from any one. Then she felt that Anne trembled from head to foot, and she exclaimed, "Oh, Anne, dear! what does it all mean? why do you shake and look so? Is it *only* Mr. Thurston?"

"James has evidently been in some danger. I do not know yet what has happened, Bertie; but Mr. Thurston is fearfully hurt, and ——"

"Never mind Mr. Thurston, he is nothing to us; he may as well be dead as lead such a sullen, cynical, morose life as he does! But is James all right?"

"I do not know, Bertie; he has been drenched through and through with tide-water, and he looks very pale, and ten years older than when he left us in the afternoon."

"You don't know, and you stay here?"

"Do not mind me," said Amy, condescendingly. Anne had never dreamed of minding her; she would scarcely have minded Queen Victoria in the present exigency! but Amy continued—"Pray do not consider me, that is, me and Bertie; do not let us keep you from your brother; we can amuse ourselves quite well alone."

"*Amuse ourselves!*" flashed out Bertie, looking nearly as dangerous as Lyulph, when unknown petticoats swept his shaggy sides. "Amuse ourselves! and suffering, perhaps death, in the house! But you would amuse your-

self if we were all corpses, waiting to be buried to-morrow! Anne, do go, and come back again and tell me, tell us; let me know if *I may* be of any use."

She spoke so vehemently that Anne was surprised. No wonder that Mrs. Temple should complain of Bertie's "strange, impetuous ways," and declare that she was lamentably deficient in her favourite grace, repose. Certainly, Bertie's mind was not so well regulated as it might have been; but then, till she came to Chalfonts, she had never been under amiable female influences, and beneath the guise of energy and spirit her father had, perhaps unwittingly, fostered a good deal of *brusquerie*. And seeing Anne still linger, she continued, "If you will not go I will."

"I am going directly, Bertie; but just now it is better for mamma to be with them. They are all in James' room. I think the doctor is attending to Mr. Thurston."

"And to James? James should not be neglected because he will not think of himself. He is not like some people;"—here there was a scornful glance at Amy, calmly stringing gold beads on scarlet purse-twist;—"he does not think firstly, lastly, and solely of himself!"

It must be confessed that the two sisters presented a very vivid contrast, and Bertie, you see, was by no means a model young lady, bearing with exemplary and saintly patience all her sister's astonishing passion and numerous shortcomings! Bertie Temple was no coward, no weak-pulsed sentimental maiden; she did not care for a tornado, a whirlwind, scarcely for an earthquake; she could have faced Euroclydon; and, had she lived in the middle ages, she might have emulated Joan of Arc. But a dead calm was what her soul abhorred, and never could endure!

Then a servant came and tapped at the door. "Miss Musgrave, ma'am, you are wanted, please."

Anne instantly obeyed the summons, and Bertie went with her from the room. In the passage she cried, "Give

me something to do, Anne! let me work. Do not they want hot water? they must want something."

"The maids will do whatever is required, Bertie, dear."

"The maids shall not! Anne, have mercy; take me with you: where you go I can go, surely. I should beat Amy if I stayed with her, and I shall go frantic shut up in my own room."

"If you are not calmer, Bertie, I will not let you go with me. Nay! you must not hold me; I daresay mamma wants me to go to the linen press. Stay in the kitchen, please; I promise to come to you in five minutes; and, Bertie, you may see that the maids keep up the fire: they had better add some coal to the peat, and let them have plenty of hot water in readiness."

"And you promise to come back to me in five minutes?"

"I promise conditionally. I might be unavoidably detained; but I will certainly come to you the moment I can do so. Sit down, Bertie, in the chimney-corner and get warm; you are trembling with excitement and with cold; unless you make yourself quiet you cannot be of any use. Now I *must* go."

And Bertie was left alone in the deserted kitchen; but presently a little maid came in, a young girl from the Duchess's school, who was being trained for service at the Holt Farm. She was a queer brown-skinned little animal, with sharp black eyes, a remarkably turn-up nose, and a peculiar way of jerking her head, and sometimes her whole body, when engaged in conversation. Her name was Judith, but she was commonly known as "Judy," and she wore the regulation dress of the institution she had lately quitted. Bertie was glad of some one to speak to, and on the whole she preferred Judy to the older maids, and would rather talk to her than to the cook or housemaid, or the rosy dairymaid, who dropped such reverent curtsies in the august presence of "young ladies down

from London!" Judy's organ of veneration was not troublesomely large; indeed, it rather required cultivation, and she sometimes got into dire disgrace through her loquacity, and her free-and-easy style in accosting her superiors, notwithstanding all the training she had had, in "ordering herself lowly and reverently to all her betters." She stooped down now to fondle the great tabby cat which was coiled up comfortably on the hearth, saying, as she did so, "You should have seen Tibb, miss, when the big dog from the Holt came in! She set up her back, and swore that awful I was quite afraid; and, seeing the big dog didn't hurt her, she made a great dab at his nose, with all her claws stuck out, and her eyes like burning coals, and her tail the thickness of my arm! I thought she would be worried, and she's poor Mr. James's favourite, miss; but the big brute drew hisself up as if he wasn't a-going to demean hisself by quarrelling with a female cat, and just boxed her ears with his awful paw—it knocked her over though—and he walked on as if nothing was the matter; and Tibb, she did swear! Do you think, miss, it's wicked in cats to cuss and swear?"

This was a question on which Bertie felt that it was just then impossible to enter. At another time she would have appreciated most heartily the absurdity of the idea; but now, after lifting into her lap "Mr. James's favourite," she inquired, "Why do you say 'poor Mr. James,' Judy?"

"Why, miss, you see he's gone and got hisself nearly drownded, and when I went to the room-door with missis's big sponge I heard the doctor saying that if he didn't get into a hot bed quick, he'd have rheumatics all his life! And to see him, that is so ruddy like, as white as your pocket-handkerchief, and that trembling as I could push him over easier than the big dog knocked over Tibb, and his voice that weak and low I didn't know it, and his face and his hands all over blood!"

"*Blood?* Then he is seriously injured?"

Judy shook her head, and then jerked it, as if she had a mind to try how far she could go with her jerks without absolutely dislocating any vetebral joint. "There's no knowing how much he's injured," she replied: "there was Cuddie Crake, second cousin to Mr. Crake, the clerk, as was tided-in upon the sands one dark winter night, and he was never the same again! The cocklers got him out and home quite safe, but he lost the use of his limbs; they say he had inward hurts: he began to die in his feet first, then his ankles and his legs went next, then his body, then his arms and neck, and last of all his head died, and then *he* was dead! I saw him, and he looked just like our Mr. James looks to-night. Them as is tided-in in those awful sands nearly always dies after it, if they're not drownded at once, or sucked up alive. The waves beats the lives out of them, you see."

"But Miss Musgrave said it was Mr. Thurston for whom the doctor feared."

"Ah! poor gentleman, he's all but gone! he's the worst, no doubt. Mr. James is awful bad, and I shouldn't wonder if two corpses doesn't go out of the house! There was signs of death in cook's tea-cup the other night!"

"Hush!" cried Bertie, authoritatively. It was getting too much to bear, and she felt that she must stop the flow of Judy's eloquence ere she drove her quite beside herself.

"Hush, Judy! how dare you speak so foolishly? Mr. James will not die."

"Who says I shall die?" asked a cheery voice coming through the dark passage kitchen-wards. "Bertie! you are to give me some hot whisky and water, and to toast me some toast." Judy fled, astonished and dismayed, from the cheerful regions of the hearth, and hid herself in the cold gloom of a dark and fireless scullery. Bertie rose

and essayed to lift the kettle on the hob—a feat she was quite unable to perform because the kettle was weighty and filled to overflowing, and her wrists were weak, and her hands shaking pitifully. James came to her assistance, and he saw that she was trembling with agitation. "Bertie!" he asked, "has anyone been saying I was going to die?"

"Yes; Judy said so!"

"Judy loves the dolorous, Bertie; you ought to have learned that by this time: but—tell me"—and he imprisoned in his the shaking little hands that were still bent on struggling with that steaming caldron of a kettle—"if I had been drowned out in the bay to-night—and God knows how near it was to being so—would you have cared, would you have cared very much, Bertie?"

The tears were beading Bertie's dark eyelashes so thickly that she could not look up, but she answered quietly, "I should have cared—very much, James!"

"Bertie, look at me!"

"Don't!" she cried, pettishly, disengaging her hands, and looking away into the uttermost parts of the low wide kitchen, as if she, too, meditated seeking refuge in the scullery.

But James resumed the custody of the hands, and went on: "Bertie, shall I tell you who I thought of *first* when among yonder quicksands, and, with the rising, angry waves all around me, I believed that I should never see my home again? Shall I tell you whose face seemed shining through the darkness that might have been to me the darkness of the grave? Shall I tell you who I should have thought of *last*, had it pleased God then to take me from this world? *Shall* I tell you, Bertie?"

"Yes; tell me."

"I need not say that it was this dear, downcast face I saw smiling on me in the gloom; that it was Bertie whom I thought of first, when I recognised my peril. It was

the sting of death, Bertie, to leave you behind me! I am afraid I thought little of my mother and of Anne, the best mother and the sweetest sister that man ever had! Bertie, will you be *my Bertie?*"

"You must ask papa."

"And if papa says 'Yes.'"

"Then perhaps Bertie will say '*Yes*'—mind only *perhaps*, James."

And James was proceeding to wipe away the tears that would come into Bertie's eyes—wiping them away, of course, in the fashion peculiar to lovers—when Amy's voice was heard approaching. "Where are you all? I am tired to death of being alone, and so frightened!"

Now there was a back way from the scullery to the servants' bedrooms, and as Amy came in Bertie fled in that direction, and in the darkness she stumbled on Judy, who said, confidentially, "Please, miss, I couldn't help hearing; and please, miss, do have me for cook when you and Mr. James gets married?"

CHAPTER XV.

AMY GIVES HER OPINION.

JAMES MUSGRAVE was "all right again" in two or three days. Anne and Bertie insisted on his being an invalid for at least a week, and for one whole morning he submitted graciously to being petted and nursed, and he allowed himself to be fed with chicken and jelly, and lay back among the sofa-cushions, with an eider-down coverlet on his feet, and listened contentedly to Bertie's pleasant voice, while she read to him the new number of

David Copperfield. It was all very charming, and James would have been a regular cynic had he failed to find himself eminently comfortable; moreover, he was really quite languid enough to find repose agreeable, and it was nice to watch Bertie, whom he now began to look upon as his own, as she sat in a low chair close by, and turned over the pages of her book; and he could not help thinking how much he preferred the *nez retroussé*—saucy, piquante, *snub* as it was—to all the noses, Grecian, Roman, or *cogitative*, that ever existed! How confidingly it *turned up*, that unclassical little nose, as James beheld it in profile! how animated was the happy face bent over the fluttering leaves! how the dark lashes swept the clear-coloured rounded cheek, and with what artistic grace the wavy braids of hair and the crisp curls gathered into a knot behind clustered about the small and shapely head, that was so full of fun and mischief, and plain good sense, and all sorts of wonderful clevernesses!

Yes, it was a most charming head undoubtedly, satisfactory to any reasonable lover, both as regarded its exterior and its interior; and when to such a head was superadded as true, and fervent, and loving a little heart as ever beat in maiden's bosom—its truth, and fervour, and wealth of love all pledged to him—it is scarcely to be wondered at that James Musgrave thought more of his own happy fortunes than of the fortunes of Dickens's hero, and his pretty, foolish, enchanting little Dora! Ah! who would care to woo and wed a *Dora*, or even an *Agnes*, when such a woman as Bertie Temple was to be had?—not James Musgrave certainly! And after gazing awhile at her, Amy seemed beautiful no more, and sweet Anne was common-place; and as for the Redmayne girls—the lovely Clara and the brilliant Jessie—they would not bear the smallest comparison with the lady of his affections! He almost pitied all other men, because there was only one Bertie in the world, and she was not for them. He took

it for granted, you see, that Mr. Temple would not withhold his consent.

And for one long morning the master of the Holt Farm lay and dreamed golden dreams, and sunned himself in the radiancy of Bertie's smiles and soft shy glances, and let her play the tender, thoughtful nurse, and listened to the music of her pleasant voice, that sounded he thought very like the merry chiming of the waves, on a still, warm day in summer, when the placid tide comes rippling in upon the golden-brown sands of some secluded bay. But as the afternoon waned, the invalid became restless, and then messages were brought to him from the outer world —"Were Jock and Tummas to begin to stubb up that piece of outlying land between the mosses and the moor?" Five minutes afterwards—"The new drain tiles were come, and where must they be stacked till wanted?" Again one of the cows, belligerently disposed, had broken her horn in single combat with another disputatious matron of the milky herd; and finally the two-year-old colt had cast himself, and "could not master just step round one minute and say what should be done?"

In vain the girls protested, in vain Bertie looked reproachfully as James sprang up from his cushions, and tossed away the eider-down quilt she had tucked so snugly round his feet. Voluntary inaction was not for him, and he felt like a giant refreshed with new wine, as he strode through the fold-yard to the croft where the luckless colt had come to grief. Decidedly there was nothing of the Sardanapalus nature in James Musgrave; he might be an ardent lover, and he would certainly make an excellent husband; but that queer anomaly, "a ladies' man," a devoted squire of dames, he could never, never be! any more than he could be the chairman of a Bubble Mining Company, or an usher in a school, on the principles of "Do-the-boys Hall," of uneviable notoriety!

And Bertie, sensible little girl as she was, after the first

pang of disappointment, felt that it was all right; that she must not expect James to linger much in parlours, or to give any large amount of time to the pleasant occupation of love-making. He would love her all the same every hour, and every minute, but he would not always be thinking specially about her, or watching to catch a glance, or to take a kiss, like common lovers, who had nothing to do save to pass away the time, and quarrel and make themselves intensely miserable, for the foolish pleasure of a reconciliation! Somehow Bertie had learned — she scarcely knew how, or from whom—since she came to Chalfonts, that life is too precious to be squandered in mere emotion, however pure and noble it may be. She had begun to see how it behoves every man and every woman, who would live worthily on God's earth, to take up the every-day work that is given as regularly as the daily bread, and to do it earnestly, carefully, appreciatively; not as mere task labour, but as the very work appointed by the wise and loving Father, who knows that idleness and dilatory service mar the happiness as well as the usefulness of His children! She had found out, too, that *talents* were manifold—nay, countless; that service was many-sided, many-phased; that it was as grand and excellent in James to make the very best of his farm as it was heroic in the soldier to risk his life for the honour of his country, or as it was glorious for a missionary to exile himself, and dare persecution, and loneliness, and death, that he might teach the Gospel of Christ to benighted heathen. "*Whatsoever* thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." And the "*whatsoever*" might be ruling a Cabinet, or keeping a village school, writing a great book, or sweeping a room, building churches, or draining the fens, making soul-compelling speeches of burning eloquence at Exeter Hall, or cooking dinners! It mattered not, so that it were indeed the very work given us to do; it was alike good, and honourable, and profitable, and it

remained only to do it heartily, conscientiously, painstakingly, and to the very best of one's ability. God would pour out His benediction on the earnest worker always; and He who is no respecter of persons would regard with equal favour a Wilberforce and a Havelock, a schoolboy doing his lessons really well, and from a right motive, and a little toiling water-cress girl, who, like the heroine of Mrs. Sewell's incomparable ballad, "is the woman who works for the bread!" It is better to do a small thing thoroughly and zealously than to idle over a great thing in slovenly sort, and with half a heart! Better to love one's work in obscurity, than to hang listlessly over unaccomplished tasks in the high places of the land!

Something of this Bertie was learning slowly and half unconsciously; yet, strange to say, the moral atmosphere that made her spirit thrive and grow had not the least effect upon her sister. Amy had not learned a single thing of value since she came to Chalfonts; she was just the same selfish, aimless creature as she had been at Kensington, and she would go back to be the languid belle of another season, to be sneered at by Hilda, and envied by Georgy, and to be a secret uneasiness and constant source of anxiety to her father, who feared her eloping with some ruined, rakish Life-Guardsman, for the sake of such attributes as splendid whiskers and matchless gifts of waltzing; or going off with some titled fop, whose income, brains, and reputation were exactly *nowhere!*

When James went away to look after the colt, Bertie sat thinking of all the changes that had come to her since the winter had set in. Anne worked steadily and kept silence, so her thoughts could roam about at their own sweet will, unchecked and uninterrupted. Bertie thought of her home, whither she must soon return, of her childhood and girlhood, of the faults which she knew were rampant in her untrained nature, of the mistakes she had been making ever since she could recollect, of the new lights that had

dawned upon her with the blithe new year, and, above all, of the new joy that had been her own but for a few brief hours. And the unspoken thought of her heart was a fervent prayer that she might be made worthy of the love she had won; that she might indeed be to James the woman whom God had given him—his helper, his best and closest friend, his comfort and his solace in the cloudy, wintry day, as well as his happiness in the sunny, summer weather!

She mused a long time, scarcely knowing that Anne had left the room, at the request of one of the maids—that Amy also had gone upstairs, probably for the third volume of the novel she was reading, and with which she soon returned; and she might have gone on rapt in her maiden meditations till tea-time, had she not been roused by her sister saying in an injured tone, "What Goths they all are! James or Anne might have stayed with us, I think. They seem quite to forget what is due to their guests."

"Surely they need not stand on ceremony with their own relations," replied Bertie, waking up reluctantly from her pleasant dream.

"I do not say so! I do not see why people should be neglected just because there is a sort of cousinship between them and their entertainers."

"A *sort* of cousinship! Why, Amy, Aunt Hannah is papa's own sister!"

"If one's sister marries a mere farmer," said Amy, with emphasis, "and places herself in a position to which she was not born, one is not obliged to claim kindred; marriage makes all the difference in these cases."

"In what cases? You are not quite lucid, Amy."

"In such cases as Aunt Hannah's. Of course she is a gentlewoman by birth; but then we women rise or sink according to the level of the man we marry. Take heed, Bertie, take heed! Remember mamma's parting injunction respecting James."

"You, at least, have remembered it."

"I have. And you, Bertie?—have *you* forgotten it?"

"I have not thought about it much, I believe. But, Amy, mamma does not know James; if she did, she would be pleased that he should care for one of us. And papa is very fond of him, I know."

"Still, I do not think he would be very anxious to have him for a son-in-law, Bertie! You make me suspect something—indeed, it is more than suspicion. I feel assured that there is some understanding between you and James. Tell me, has he spoken—has he ventured to declare his most presumptuous love?"

"I do not know that a girl is bound to confess to her sister, even if that sister be thirteen months her senior. Papa and Aunt Hannah are the only persons towards whom I feel inclined to be entirely candid. But as I have no fancy for mysteries, and don't want to make myself the least bit of a heroine, and as your strictures, though forcible, cannot possibly alter my own opinion, or make me falter for an instant, I do not mind telling you that James *has spoken*, as you call it. He asked me to be 'his Bertie' last night."

"And you consented?"

"Of course I did, because I cared for him! Equally of course, I referred him to papa. I do not consider myself engaged to James till papa gives an unqualified consent, as I know he will do."

"Mercy! And you will make dumplings for ever!"

"I will vary my occupations a little. James is very fond of dumplings, I own; but he would not like to live upon them continually. He shall have a pudding sometimes, or a custard if he is very good; and really he seems to have a thorough appreciation of game-pie, and I shall indulge him occasionally in the proper season. No, Amy, dumpling-making will not be my sole avocation."

"It would not matter if it were. When I talk of dump-

lings, I mean cooking as a whole! Why, mamma never made a dumpling, nor messed her fingers with flour and water in her life! She never goes near the kitchen, if she can help it."

"That is why we sometimes have such absolute failures of dinners! Cook knows she may sin with impunity; and I need not tell you the result. There are a great many things going wrong in our house, Amy, that I do not intend shall go wrong in mine. I should like my husband to have a little more comfort than papa has."

"And you really mean to *marry* James? or is it only *pour passer le temps*, in this uncivilised out-of-the-way place, where there is literally nothing going on, except people getting themselves drowned, and waste lands getting drained, and cows getting sick, and colts getting into trouble."

Bertie was flaming now with indignation, and she turned round upon Amy with one of those angry, dauntless flashes that always for the moment quelled the weaker spirit. "Do not judge me by yourself," she cried vehemently; "I would as soon commit murder as torture a good man, as I have seen you torture simpletons. Do you think I would trifle with James, make him think I *cared* only that I might amuse myself? Do you think I could be so unwomanly, so mean, so contemptible, so wicked? Do you suppose I have no heart, or that I care nothing about vexing aunt and Anne? Why, they would be terribly fretted, if they thought that James was made unhappy!"

"There! you need not put yourself in such a passion. Of course you can marry whom you please, only I may be forgiven for wishing to have a brother-in-law of another stamp. I *cannot* be interested in a man who wears such boots, and never wears gloves, except at church, or sometimes when he goes to Lunechester, or St. Ulpha's. The only good thing about him is his name: he is a Musgrave;

that is in his favour; but then he is the only Musgrave who actually works for his bread."

"I am not so sure of that! But if he were the only man in the world who worked for his bread, I should only respect him the more. Why, does not papa work also?"

"Papa does not work for an actual living!"

"We should find ourselves in terribly straitened circumstances if we were deprived of papa's literary income. He earns money, and spends it upon his family: if he does not work for bread, he does for cheese; all the luxuries we enjoy come not from private sources, but are the fruits of papa's industry."

"There is nothing derogatory in writing books and reviews; a nobleman does not lose caste if he becomes an author. A literary man, provided he be successful, is always received in society—nay, more, he is courted, fêted, worshipped—if he make himself any kind of name. A literary man of the day must be eminently a gentleman; his industry is an honour to him."

"And is not all industry honourable?"

"No doubt it is; but it would not be honourable in papa to handle drain-tiles, as I saw James doing yesterday morning. It is all very well for James, I suppose; he was born to it; but he should marry a woman of his own stamp."

"I flatter myself I am a woman of his stamp. If I thought differently, nothing should tempt me to become his wife."

"Ah, well! I will not argue with you; we always see things differently; but I wonder what mamma will say!"

And Bertie wondered too, and decided that James must write to papa that very evening, and that she must write too, else Amy would certainly favour mamma with one of her unconnected lengthy epistles, written on pink paper, and crossed and recrossed in a manner peculiar to herself; and the news would reach Kensington in an undesirable

way, and the falsest impressions would be created. And then, lest Amy should renew a conversation which might degenerate into a quarrel, Bertie went away to her own room, and remained there till she thought it must be tea-time. It was quite dark, and she lingered by the fire, feeling very happy, and very secure in her happiness, though wishing heartily that mamma had heard the news, and had had "her say." What sort of *a say* it would be she knew well enough; not pleasant to herself, certainly not complimentary to her betrothed! She pitied papa for having to listen to a long tirade, as wearying as it was unreasonable; for having to answer all kinds of foolish objections; for having to carry on argument after argument; all useless, vapid, and unnecessary, and always with the same unsatisfactory result. But of Mr. Temple himself she felt not the slightest doubt. He would give his free consent, and in due time bring round her mother to tolerate, if not to approve the match: she had only to be patient with Amy, and try to make herself worthy of the man who one day would be her husband; a man noble in himself, esteemed by all who knew him—a brave, clever, tender-hearted, God-fearing man, whom any woman might be proud to love.

She was wondering whether he might not be come in again by this time, and she was preparing to light the toilet-table candles, and make some slight alterations in her dress, when some one tapped at the door, and Anne came in. "Bertie, dear! tea is on the table."

"Is it so late? I wanted to put on a fresh collar."

"There will be time for that, for you are always quick. But, Bertie, let me kiss you first, and call you *Sister Bertie*. I have been talking to James; he came in a quarter of an hour ago."

"Is he any the worse for going out?"

"He appears to be all the better, and, Bertie, you have made him very happy; so much happiness must surely do

away with all possible evils that might result from a salt-water soaking. Only to think, we shall keep you always."

"But it is not an engagement yet; I only said last night that if papa said 'yes,' it was just possible I might not say 'no.' It all goes for nothing till papa writes."

"Of course, of course! We should be very sorry to tempt you to be undutiful; but Uncle Temple will not object? And yet it is a great thing we are asking him, to let us have Bertie—his Bertie—for ourselves!"

"If one could only marry without leaving one's father and early friends!"

"One can sometimes, but not often! However, I suppose my uncle would not wish to keep all his daughters spinsters; and when he has lost you, he has four more at home. Of course, when you are married, mamma and I will go to Rose Cottage."

"Why should you? There is room enough here for all of us. Why, there are bed-rooms that no one ever uses: and that 'blue-room,' as it is called, would make a charming upstairs sitting-room. I often think what a pity it is that it should not be used; it is the largest and the pleasantest of all the chambers. I wonder you do not take it for your own."

"I have thought of doing so more than once, but I never liked to propose it. It was the room that papa and mamma had long ago, and papa died there. Somehow I fancied that mamma liked keeping it empty; but now it is being prepared for occupation, and it was mamma herself who gave the necessary orders."

"Who is going to have it?"

"Mr. Thurston is going to be moved into it; it is so much more airy, more spacious, and more convenient than James's room, in which he lies now. Besides, the smaller room adjoining will do for Mrs. Twentyman, and for Nurse Jackson, for whom Dr. Wilson has sent."

"Oh, Anne! what a selfish creature I am! I have

been so absorbed in my own concerns that I have forgotten all about Mr. Thurston. How is he?"

"He is very ill; in very great danger I am afraid. Dr. Wilson is seriously alarmed, and talking of sending to Ribbleton for further advice; he is afraid there are some internal injuries which he did not at first suspect."

"He is delirious, is he not?"

"Yes! not violently so, but still quite delirious. He does not know that he is at Chalfonts; he fancies himself in some German town, and he rambles on about all sorts of things; sometimes he is talking French or German, sometimes languages I do not recognise; very seldom English. But mamma says, it is easy to discern, from the few broken sentences that one can understand, that he has been a very unhappy man."

"I do not wonder! He is so morose, and besides he is an infidel, though he does go to church."

"Ah! do not call him *that*, Bertie; you do not know what his teachings have been, nor how terribly his faith has been assailed; and he would not have been morose, had he been more happily situated."

"I hope he will not die."

"He will not! God will teach him yet, and bring him home to Himself."

CHAPTER XVI.

CONVALESCENCE.

But for many days, and even for weeks, it seemed that Gerard Thurston would die. The fever increased, and baffled the skill of all the doctors, who were summoned from far and near to assist at divers consultations. A

famous physician came down from London, and after hearing much and saying little, and feeling his patient's pulse, and shaking his head lugubriously, he arrived at the simple conclusion that Mr. Thurston was extremely ill, and that his recovery, if ever it took place, must be a work of time: also that the treatment had better be continued, and that he quite concurred with Dr. Wilson, &c., &c. Then he partook of an excellent luncheon, and praised Mrs. Musgrave's sherry, and then he pocketed a sumptuous fee, and departed. And Dr. Wilson had the comfort of his superior's approbation, and that was all; he had not gained a single gleam of light upon the case; whatever he affirmed the celebrated man agreed to; whatever questions he asked were answered vaguely and indefinitely, and with a sagacious solemnity that amused him in spite of his anxiety, and in spite of the deep reverence which the country practitioner had entertained toward the famous town M.D. And Mrs. Twentyman became ill and nervous; in doctors' phrase, she "knocked up," and had to be sent home to the Holt, and the hired nurses began to tire of their work, and one had to be dismissed as incompetent, and another to be severely reprimanded for going to sleep when doubtless she ought to have been awake. And it came to pass at last, that all the responsibility rested on Mrs. Musgrave and Anne, and on poor devoted Swingleswairy, who seemed endowed with supernatural powers of watching, who never tired, never forgot anything, never left his master if he could help it, and would have taken his short, disturbed slumbers on the floor at the foot of the patient's bed, had Mrs. Musgrave permitted it.

At length there came a day when life and death were evidently trembling in the balance—a day whose eventide would bring with it the close of mortal life, or the revival of a hope that might be safely cherished. It was past noon when Gerard fell asleep, and when he awoke it

would be known whether he was to live or die; that awaking would be to another life beyond the grave, or to the renewal of that which had hitherto been to its owner so dreary, so isolated, and so unprofitable! The hours passed slowly and heavily away; all sounds were hushed, no footsteps save the lightest and the most wary trod the upper floors; no door was closed or opened without the greatest care; the servants were ordered to keep themselves to their own back settlements, and Judy was actually banished from the house, on account of her tendency to tumble upstairs, and because of a certain infirmity in the wrists and fingers, which caused her to drop what she carried, sometimes with a fearful crash, that brought all the family to the spot. As it would be quite impossible to prevent her from straying out of bounds, unless tied to the plate-rack in the scullery, which cook at once proposed as the safest and shortest plan of keeping her quiet and out of mischief; and if left to roam about at her own sweet will it was tolerably certain that her inquiring disposition would lead her to haunt the passage into which Mr. Thurston's room opened, and there knock down a broom, or roll the slop-pail over, for she was generally to be seen with these humble but very requisite household implements in her hands, together with more scrubbing and black-lead brushes, and dust-pans than it was reasonable for anyone to attempt to carry at one time; or else tumble down herself, with a general scatter of pail and pan, and brush and broom, that might have roused the seven sleepers, to say nothing of the one sleeper whose life was depending on his slumbers being uninvaded,—Judy was sent to her old quarters at the Duchess' school, to render what help she could there, and wonderful was the impression she produced upon her former friends, and great was the confusion she wrought, and thankful was the much-enduring matron, when the next day she returned to the Holt Farm.

But in the meantime the household of the Musgraves was happily undisturbed, and the sleep that at first was death-like and unnatural became calm and light, but still unbroken; and when the evening gathered in, and the sick man still slumbered peacefully as a child, they who watched about his bed knew that God had heard their prayers, and had prolonged the life that seemed so nearly at its close. And Mrs. Musgrave's heart overflowed with thankfulness, for by slow degrees as she nursed the sufferer, she had learned to regard him with the tenderness and affection of an elder sister. Her kindly regard could scarcely be called maternal, though such it certainly was at its root and in its source, for she was one of those women whose pure motherly nature expands itself on whatever feeble or dependent creature comes within its reach; but then Mrs. Musgrave was not more than ten years older than Gerard Thurston.

When he opened his eyes all delirium was gone, and he tried to raise himself and look round the unfamiliar chamber. He had had intervals of consciousness during his illness, and he had known or seemed to know the cause of his sojourn at Holt Farm, and he had several times recognised his hostess, and Anne, and James, and Swingleswairy; but now memory failed him, he was too weak to recall the past, and he scarcely knew whether the dim pictures which his half-awakened mind beheld, as through a misty lapse of years, were indeed a real or only another series of the visions he had looked upon; half fancy, half reminiscence, while fever held its sway, and his troubled brain went wandering through all the bewildering mazes of an actual and an ideal past.

Mrs. Musgrave was at his side in a moment with the cordial she had in readiness, and he took it with the trustfulness and something of the eagerness of a child; then he looked keenly in her face, but he was too weak to lift himself from his pillow, as he evidently wished. Then

he saw his faithful Swingleswairy trembling with delight, cracking his finger-joints in his excitement, while the tears of joy ran down his pale olive cheeks. His emotion became so evident that Mrs. Musgrave had to threaten him with expulsion from his master's room; and though he could not understand her words, he perfectly comprehended the rebuke and the punishment that must follow if he failed to control his agitation. So he laid his hand on his heart, looked up to heaven, pointed to his master, and finally made a profound *salaam*, indicative of meek obedience.

But Mr. Thurston was not to be awed into unquestioning obedience; indeed, obedience was a virtue he had never yet practised, and he had no idea of commencing it now, feeble and helpless as he was! Mrs. Musgrave saw that he would not be repressed with a gesture or a word, or even with a firm refusal to enter into conversation. Dr. Wilson had said he must be kept very quiet, and not allowed to talk; but the good doctor had not taken into account the self-willed, impulsive nature of his patient; and Mrs. Musgrave was a sensible woman, and argued that it would do a man in his circumstances more harm to fret and chafe against an imposed restraint than to permit him to exhaust a little of his physical force for a few minutes. It is all in vain to bid an invalid be quiet and to hush him into silence, when his mind is quite alive to certain exigencies, and when he is feverishly impatient to know a certain something which appears to be concealed. What is the use of limbs and tongue being passive, when the spirit is in a state of seething effervescence?

So Mrs. Musgrave sat quietly down by the bedside and began to knit; her sweet, calm looks and the gentle motion of her plump white hands tending to soothe and calm the restlessness of the invalid. And when he spoke she replied quietly, and did not bid him "hush!" only

clothing her answer in as few and as definite words as possible.

"You are very good to me!" he said, at length, as he watched the kind expressive face, and listened to the soft, clear voice that without any circumlocution, or unnecessary words, told him all he wished to know. "How long have I been here, Mrs. Musgrave?"

"Nearly six weeks; it was the second week in February when the accident occurred which brought you to us; to-morrow will be Lady-day!"

"How much I owe you! I think I know now what it must be to have a mother."

"Do you not remember yours?"

His brow darkened. "I do remember her, though I strive to forget her; she was vain, fickle, false, like many another of her frail sex! Forgive me, Mrs. Musgrave, memories of my mother rouse bitter, angry thoughts! I must seem very ungrateful, but I am not so really; indeed, *you* have made me trustful as I never dreamed I could be again. You do not know what it is for one human creature to place perfect confidence in another, and find that confidence betrayed. I would have staked my life once upon the fidelity of one woman, but if I had so done I should have lost the stake. I was deceived, deluded, miserably befooled, and I thought I could never trust again; but you have taught me my error. I can and *do* trust *you*."

"I am glad of that, and when you are a little better you shall talk to me, as if I were indeed your mother, and you shall tell me just as much or just as little of past experiences as you choose, only we must not begin to excite ourselves to-night. I have watched by you all day and I am very tired, and I should like to have some supper and go to bed; for my children's sake, you know, I am bound to take a little care of myself."

"Indeed you are; do not let me keep you another

minute, Mrs. Musgrave. I am a miserable, selfish animal, I believe. I never thought of your fatigue. Go, I pray you, and leave me to Swingleswairy."

It was extremely wise in Mrs. Musgrave thus to interrupt the conversation, which had certainly taken too exciting a direction, by pleading her own weariness and need of rest. Had she tried to enforce silence for the patient's sake, he would certainly have turned rebellious on the spot, and protested that talking only did him good. But thus presenting her own claims, and throwing herself as it were upon his generosity, he could not choose but yield, and readily consented to her departure; and then, finding himself much weaker than he had at all suspected, he was willing to hold his peace, and dreamily watch Swingleswairy as he moved noiselessly about the room, till drowsiness and languor once more gave way to slumber; and when he awoke again it was to find the huge frilled nightcap of Nurse Jackson almost touching his face, and a spoon filled with strong and palatable beef-tea going between his lips, and having taken as much nourishment as nurse would give him, he learned that it was half-past three in the morning, and that Mrs. Musgrave had gone to bed a little before twelve. Then he slept again, and awoke to find it high day and to wish for breakfast, and finally he made up his mind that he was getting well very fast, and must really think of going back to Canonbury Holt. The oak parlour and the Abbot's chamber would be very dreary though to a convalescent, especially after the cheeriness and cosy comfort of the Farm.

But when Dr. Wilson came he quickly settled everything. He told Mr. Thurston that he had had a very serious illness, and a very narrow escape—indeed, *two* narrow escapes from death! one among the quicksands of Cockleham Bay, the other from the injuries produced by exposure, semi-drowning, and the wounds and contusions

he had received among the rocks and upon the fishers' stakes; that he had an excellent constitution and a vast amount of vitality, that he would take about as much killing as a cat, and that now he had nothing to do but to get well—only he must get well before he took any liberties with himself, or the nine lives, with which he, Dr. Wilson, credited him might be very rapidly expended. "Therefore, sir," concluded the good man, "I forbid you to take a single step at your own discretion; you are to improve as fast as I tell you and no faster; when I bid you get up you may get up, but not a quarter of an hour before; when I say you may go downstairs you may go down, but not a minute earlier; when I tell you to return home you may return, but not till then! Leave yourself entirely in my hands and Mrs. Musgrave's; we will rule you well and kindly, and it is your part to obey."

And so, for the first time in his life, Gerard Thurston yielded voluntary, uncompromising obedience, for he actually *trusted* Dr. Wilson, and believed that he was true at heart, as well as skilled in medical science. As for Mrs. Musgrave, he would have blindly placed his life and honour at her disposal, knowing that she was a perfectly sincere and "nobly-planned" woman, and one to be relied on to the death! And yet he had vowed never again to put faith in mortal woman! But then he had meant *young* women; women at least who were younger than himself; and Mrs. Musgrave was older, he knew not by how many years, and cared not, for she would always be to him a vision of what his mother might have been had she been far other than she was! No! his vow scarcely included steady, time-proved, motherly women, such as Mrs. Musgrave; and to be wanting in faith to her, after all her thoughtful care and self-sacrificing kindness, would be indeed a base return for unmerited, unmitigated goodness—a black species of ingratitude, of which he, cynic and satirist as he felt himself to be, was

yet incapable. But then, what about Anne? Instinctively he trusted her, though he tried to persuade himself that he did not; there was something in Anne that won his confidence from the very first; something that, in spite of himself, drew him out of his shell of long-established reserve; something which compelled him to be honest, and even frank, when he spoke with her; something, too, which commanded his profound esteem and his absolute respect. Even Lyulph recognised in Anne Musgrave a creature superior to the common race of womankind; indeed, since he had lived at the farm, he had tacitly acknowledged a mistress's sway, and he would leave his master's chamber only at her command, and seemed to take a great delight in accompanying her in her walks, always provided that Miss Temple was not with her. He sulkily tolerated Bertie, but Amy he decidedly persecuted, chiefly, Anne believed, out of pure fun, because she was so frightened and ran away screaming if he came within a dozen yards of her.

Thurston had read little modern English poetry; he was familiar with Pope, and Dryden, and Akenside, and of course with the earlier poets, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton; but of our own contemporary Tennyson, of Wordsworth, Southey, Coleridge, and all their glorious fraternity, he was profoundly ignorant. But now, as health slowly returned, and the hours of convalescence began to hang heavily on his hands, he was glad to solace himself with such books as were most easily procured; and among the volumes that were brought to him for selection was a complete set of Wordsworth's "Poems," save and except the "Prelude," which had not then been given to the public. And for the first time Gerard Thurston read that exquisite portraiture of "Mary," the Rydal bard's own wife, and wondered whether Anne Musgrave might not equally well have sat for the original, and also whether there really were any, or many more such

women in the world as Rydal-Mary, and Canonbury-Anne! And never did he see Anne from his window—as she worked among the garden beds, tending her spring flowers, or going for one of her long rambles, which nearly always took in sundry visits of charity, on returning home from one of these expeditions with Lyulph solemnly walking by her side—without recalling the verses which, from his first reading of them, had seemed made on purpose to describe Anne Musgrave; for she was, indeed, to his comprehension, "a spirit yet a woman too." He beheld in her the—

> "Household motions light and free,
> And steps of virgin liberty;
> A countenance in which did meet
> Sweet records, promises as sweet;
> A creature not too bright or good
> For human nature's daily food;
> For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
> Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles."

At the end of a week Gerard was able to leave his chamber, but not to go downstairs, and a small room at no great distance from his own was fitted up for him as a temporary parlour. It was a charming little retreat when it was ready for his reception, and Lyulph at once took possession of the hearthrug, and after a leisurely survey of all around evinced his unqualified approbation of his new quarters, by winking lazily from side to side, poking his nose under the fender, and beating his great club of a tail against the leg of the table. The view from the window was beautiful; it overlooked the mosses with their richly-wooded skirts and belts of shining water; then the bay glittering now in the bright spring sunlight, and then far away to the east and south purple hills and wavy moors—the great solemn Titan mountains were behind northward, and so not included in the panorama.

It was a lovely afternoon, and Gerard sat by the casement, Southey's "Curse of Kehama" in his hand, but his

eyes wandering wearily over the beauteous landscape without; and once more Lyulph came and put his paws upon his master's knees, and looked wistfully into his face, as if he longed as of old to be taken into confidence. And Gerard, stroking back the ears of the huge creature, began to talk to him for the first time since his illness; and Lyulph, in his peculiar fashion, explained to his master how satisfactory was this restoration of their former understanding.

"Well! old boy! you really seem to be enjoying yourself! I really believe you like the Farm better than the Holt, whither we must return in a few days now! It will be very dreary there for both of us; we shall miss Mrs. Musgrave dreadfully, for Mrs. Twentyman, though as kind and as dutiful an old soul as ever lived, is not exactly the kind of person towards whom one can feel filial! She is an excellent housekeeper, and nothing more; and you do not like her, Lyulph, and you make her howl and scutter in the passages, and I wish you would not; you may just as well tolerate people with a good grace as with an ill one. I don't want you to be too familiar with the folk; I like you for being so exclusive, but you may just as well be decently civil in your outward demeanour, and Mrs. Twentyman, you know, cannot be dispensed with; therefore it would be infinitely better if you left off making rushes at her petticoats, with the air of a wolf bent on worrying a lamb: she naturally shrieks when you come near her, and that exasperates me; so I desire you will mend your manners, and behave yourself like a gentleman. Why did you not go out with Anne this pleasant afternoon? I heard her say she was going into Chalfonts to see the Redmayne girls, and you always behave discreetly when you are with Miss Musgrave. What do you think of Anne, good hound? But I need not ask you. You showed your appreciation of her wondrous superiority the first time you ever met; like a great rude beast as you are, you knocked over that silly little thing with the blue

eyes and the waxen features, but you made overtures of friendship to Miss Musgrave on the spot. A very just appreciation you have of people, Master Lyulph. How would you like her to be always at Canonbury Holt? Just think how those long disused rooms would look, if they were restored to daily life again; how it would change the whole aspect of the place, if there were work-baskets, and flowers, and pretty things, and such like feminine gear scattered all about. If Mrs. Twentyman had to take her orders now from a mistress, instead of bothering me and you, when we want to be busy with Mozart and Beethoven, or deep in *Vertôt*, or in *Froissart!* If Mrs. Musgrave should have a right to come to the Holt without ceremony, as often as she liked, I might be a better man, I think! Indeed, why should she not live there altogether, since her son is thinking of getting married, and he is master here?"

And lying back in his pillowed easy chair, with Lyulph contemplating him in undisguised perplexity, Gerard Thurston dreamed a day dream. And he dreamt of the Holt as no longer desolate and forlorn; no more echoing rooms, no more solitary hearths, no more silent meals, no more torturing reminiscences of the past! And yet, *could* those wretched memories be banished? Could a calm and sunny future ever atone for a miserable irrevocable past? But the dream went on growing brighter and sweeter every moment;—he saw himself a happy man, living on the whole a secluded life, but taking his part in the world, and mixing, for duty's sake at least, with his equals in society; helping the oppressed, showing kindness to the poor and the unfortunate, feeling an interest in the welfare of the county, especially of his own neighbourhood, and, above all things, working hand in hand with James Musgrave in the matter of redeeming the waste lands, and keeping out the sea from the mosses and the marshes. And he saw Anne, in her quiet grace,

moving about Canonbury Holt, its mistress and its queen!

> "A perfect woman, nobly planned
> To warn, to comfort, and command,
> And yet a spirit still, and bright,
> With something of angelic light."

He saw her sitting by the hearth in winter evenings, and roaming by his side in summer days; and dreaming further on, he heard the silvery voices of children at play in those desolate old halls of his, where childish music had not been for a full century! It was all very fair and good, but suddenly he seemed to awake, and the golden vision grew grey and dim, while with stern brow and painfully compressed lips he murmured, "No, no! I dare not!—for her sake it must not be: how could I venture to run the risk of marring such a life as hers?"

CHAPTER XVII.

MRS. TEMPLE REQUIRES SYMPATHY.

AND meanwhile the expected letter from Kensington had been received: Mr. Temple had given his consent, though not without conditions, and James and Bertie were formally engaged. The conditions were simple and few, but stringent enough to be displeasing to James, the chief one being the postponement of his marriage—which he had intended should take place in the autumn as soon as the harvest was gathered in—till Bertie should have passed her twentieth birthday, and she was now scarcely eighteen and a half. However, there was nothing for it but to submit, and Bertie herself gladly acquiesced, for thoroughly as she loved and trusted James, she was in no haste to resign

her girlhood; she was more than content to spend some months still in her own home, to be yet longer her father's friend and chief companion, and to have time to qualify herself to the best of her ability for the new and important sphere she was expecting presently to fill.

"For," as she naively said to Anne, "one can only be a girl at home for a limited period, and for once in one's life, and girlhood once exchanged for matronhood can never be recalled; while, if one lives, there may be half a century of womanhood to come, and no end of opportunities of proving one's excellence as wife and mistress! I think, Anne, it is a mistake in girls being in such a hurry to become matrons."

"And I think so too," was Anne's reply. "The period which elapses between leaving school and marriage is certainly one of the sweetest, and safest, and happiest of our lives! We have many privileges and few responsibilities, many joys and few cares, and we have leisure to carry on the culture and mental training which was only just begun when our governesses left us; for, after all, Bertie, we educate ourselves, and all that we learn in schoolroom days is only mere foundation on which the future edifice may rest; perhaps only the scaffolding, which is nothing in itself, and yet necessary to the rising building. If we rush straight from the duties of a schoolgirl to those of a married woman there is no time to digest all the crude material of what is commonly called education; indeed, the chances are that, in the hurry and excitement of the new sphere of action, we shall forget much of that which it took so many precious hours, so much toil, to acquire. There is no time for the feelings to develop, for the mind to strengthen, for the judgment to ripen, for one is utterly without experience; and I quite believe that which our elders tell us, that experience is an article we must purchase for ourselves, since not one young person in ten thousand is willing to take it as a gift from another. So,

Bertie, you may be glad that you are to have eighteen months more of home life!"

"I am glad! only, Anne,—I *may* say it to you, you are as good as my sister now,—I am afraid mamma will be very worrying!"

"She does not approve, then?"

"No! I told you she did not. She gives her consent, but she has such a prejudice against people who *work*, that she thinks I am lowering myself by marrying a farmer, even though he be a Musgrave. Poor mamma, you know, was brought up to do nothing—literally, not metaphorically, to do nothing; she was accustomed in her girlhood to be on the sofa for days together, without the least pretence of occupation. Her life was one long *siesta* till she came to England, and, of course, she brought her West Indian constitution with her, and all her languid habits, and her natural prejudices. And she thinks it derogatory in people of gentle birth to do anything for their living unless it be literary labour, like papa's, or playing at work in some sinecure Government office, or being in the army, or something of that sort. Of course, it is all a tremendous mistake, but we never try to combat mamma's peculiar notions: even papa has given it up, and how he brought her over to say she agreed to our engagement I cannot think; I expect he just told her she *was* to give her sanction, and when she sees he really is in earnest, she does whatever she is bidden. But I wish I had seen her and had the first shock over; for I know she will tell me I have disappointed her."

James and Bertie little knew how much trouble their "falling in love" with each other had given Mr. Temple: they little imagined how, for several days, his life was a weariness to him, by reason of his wife's reproaches and tearful lamentations. That Bertie was doomed to live in a semi-savage country, and churn and bake, and take her butter to market, and cook harvest-suppers for the natural

term of her existence, was what she really and truly believed. Amy had fortunately said nothing about the vexed question of the *dumplings*, but she had given a full description of James himself, from his curly chestnut locks to his "horribly thick boots!" and she had further remarked that he might be, and no doubt was, a very good and respectable young man, but that he was a decided vulgarian, given to eating bread and cheese, and not at all averse to dirty hands, with—such shocking notions on the subject of religion! Mr. Thurston also came in for severe criticism: Dr. Wilson was stupid and countryfied, and Dr. Redmayne dull and very pompous. The truth of the whole matter being that these gentlemen had proved themselves shamefully insensible to Miss Temple's charms. Since she came to Fellshire no one had rendered her the homage to which she was accustomed; no one had worshipped at her shrine; no one had specially admired her, or paid her flattering attentions, and she was naturally disgusted at such an unprecedented state of things.

But this unsatisfactory engagement of which Mrs Temple was so thoroughly ashamed, and which she constantly deplored in little pattering jeremiads, that made her luckless husband well-nigh crazy, was all Mr. Temple's fault. It was his doing that the girls were banished to Chalfonts, excluded from the pale of civilised society, and exposed to the dangers and perils of unequal matches. She had foreseen it all from the first moment, and she had warned her daughters before they had quitted her; she had besought them to avoid any entanglement of the kind, and Amy had been docile and obedient, as she always was; but Bertie, who, on the other side, always chose to have her own way, and whose tastes were certainly a little *low*, had just fallen into the snare, and, Mr. Temple having been weak enough to consent to the engagement, he must expect to reap the consequences. It would be very unpleasant to them all, but especially to Amy, who would

doubtless secure a coronet; *she* might be, probably, a peeress of the realm, while her degenerate sister was a common farmer's wife. And Mr. Temple would quietly reply, "My dear, I believe that the nobleman who is to be blessed with such conjugal felicity is not in existence; also, I beg leave to remark that my daughter Bertie is not going to marry 'a common farmer,' but a gentleman, who devotes himself to agricultural pursuits—a young man for whom I have a profound admiration, and the son of my sister Hannah, who married into a decayed but directly-descended branch of one of the best families in that part of the country! If we come to a mere question of pedigree, my dear, the Musgraves will be found to have the advantage of the Temples."

So for the moment Mrs. Temple would be pacified; but presently something would revive in her mind the picture of Bertie trotting to market with a pannier of butter on her arm! Bertie feeding calves! Bertie frying fat rashers of bacon for plebeian devourers!—and, worst of all, Bertie grown stout, and rosy-red, and loud-voiced, with a troop of unmannerly children at her heels—children who would call *her* "grandmamma!"

Having drawn the outlines of these fancy sketches of poor Bertie's future, and having filled them in to her own satisfaction, Mrs. Temple felt so very uncomfortable, that she thought she must go and unbosom herself to some sympathising friend. But Mrs. Torrens was out of town, and with Mrs. Mitchell there had been some slight misunderstanding, and she was afraid to trust Lady Lucy Talkington, who might chatter too widely about Miss Bertie Temple's low connections. Mrs. Snagger of course was not to be thought of, for Mrs. Temple disliked her more than ever, and felt convinced that she was only waiting her demise in order to commence operations, which should result in her becoming reversionary mistress of Tylney House! So there remained only one alternative,

especially as the bleak March day threatened to become wild and snowy; and Mrs. Temple went off to the schoolroom, to make her moan to Madame Gerard, who was not altogether ignorant of the existence of Mr. James Musgrave, having been early instructed by Hilda in some particulars of the family history.

"I am sorry if the engagement does not please you," said Madame, when Mrs. Temple had concluded a long and not very intelligible harangue; "would it be quite in vain to remonstrate with Miss Bertie?"

"Quite! She was always obstinate and self-willed from a child—just as tiresome as Hilda there; besides, her papa upholds her in her foolishness."

Madame Gerard knew quite enough of Mr. Temple by this time to be pretty sure that he never would uphold any one in foolishness; therefore she felt convinced that the "foolishness" was on Mrs. Temple's side. From the first day of her residence at Tylney House she had not conceived a very high opinion of that lady's strength of mind, and she had heard her say a great number of silly things, and wondered how any human being could pass so much time in actually doing nothing.

"Does James Musgrave drive the plough, and load manure-carts, like the men we saw at Heysham Farm?" asked Georgy, in her usual sleepy tones, affectedly stroking back her braids of shining golden hair.

"No doubt, my love; and Bertie will have to make the butter and cheese, and take it to market. I suppose she will keep one good strong servant-girl!"

"How *can* she be so ridiculous?" inquired Miss Georgy, languidly. "But then what will not one do for *love?* One cannot help one's affections, you know, mamma! and if it's Bertie's fate!"

Georgy had read so many novels of all sorts, that she felt herself, in her sixteenth year, to be quite an authority in matters of this kind. Also, she had had some small

experiences of her own. There was a young gentleman at church with heavenly eyes, and the loveliest moustache, who looked at her instead of looking at his Prayer-book, but she did not know his name; and there was the handsomest hairdresser in the world in Regent Street, and she was sure he was a foreign prince, or a nobleman in disguise, and she had seen him put one of her golden locks, which he had just snipped off, into his waistcoat-pocket, with such a sigh! Altogether Georgy rather sympathised with the lovers, though she thought Bertie must be rather silly not to want a grander person; but "love will still be lord of all," she murmured to herself, thinking of the knight of the curling-tongs, whose image was just then in the ascendant. Decidedly Mrs. Temple's communication was not beneficial to her daughter Georgina, who was quite silly enough already; and she felt rather aghast at that young lady's precocity of sentiment.

But Hilda exclaimed, "I am so glad! it will be so jolly to have Bertie married and settled at Chalfonts! I shall go to see her, and have crisp oat-cakes and splendid butter, and strawberries and real cream; and I shall help her feed the calves, dear little things; and, oh! I hope she will keep plenty of chickens and lambs, and a pony or two that I can ride! Oh! it will be jolly, absolutely *jolly!*"

"Have I not forbidden you to use that objectionable phrase, Hilda?"

"Yes, mamma; but I have discovered that it is only a corruption of the French word *joli*. I told Madame Gerard so yesterday, and she could not deny it. Oh! it is a jolly word, and I really must not be deprived of it."

Mrs. Temple perceived that her two young daughters were decidedly unsympathetic; so she turned again to Madame Gerard, and talked and talked about her grievances, till the governess felt nearly desperate! She was giving Juliet a music-lesson—the other two girls took

their lessons from a master, Madame not pretending to teach more than just the rudiments; she could only, as Hilda affirmed, go up and down the scales, and play a few instruction-book tunes, but she quite understood time and fingering, and expression, and all that sort of thing. Juliet, interrupted in the midst of "*Sul margine d'un Rio*," was drinking in with thirsty ears all that her mamma said about Bertie and James Musgrave, and she was intending to tell it all to the housemaid, with additions and variations of her own, as soon as ever she could make her escape to the regions where that amiable functionary was to be found.

Mrs. Temple talked on, sometimes to the point, and sometimes not to the point; and she diverged into the histories of several low marriages of which she had been cognizant, and went off into all sorts of ramifications of episodes, which did not seem to have the remotest connection with the subject she came there to discuss. Madame Gerard was heartily wearied, and found it quite impossible to listen with due attention, and her thoughts had wandered far away, and Hilda wondered why she looked so pale, so cold and melancholy. Hilda was not curious like Juliet, or sentimental like Georgy, but she often wished that she knew Madame Gerard's story, and she nourished a hope that some day, when she was a little older, Madame might tell it to her. Suddenly she was roused out of her speculations by a great crash of the pianoforte keys; the heavy music-book had fallen down and hurt Juliet's wrists, and Juliet declared that Madame had "snatched at it, clutched at it like, and pulled it down!" Mrs. Temple had just said, "If it had been *that* Mr. Thurston now, the Master of Canonbury Holt! but I have some hopes there, that Amy—well, I ought not to say anything, for the poor man is dying, and——" And then came the *tremando fortissimo*, executed by the music-book, and when Juliet was pacified Madame was

discovered leaning on the book-shelves, "trembling and white, and just shivering all over," as Hilda afterwards declared.

"Why! you are as nervous as I am!" exclaimed Mrs. Temple, quite drawn towards her governess—she always fraternised with nervous people, as having fine organisations, and temperaments of the most sensitive description. "Come with me, Madame, and we will have some luncheon together — we will have oyster-patties, and a pint bottle of champagne!"

But Madame Gerard excused herself; "she never took champagne, and rich luncheons disagreed with her;" so Mrs. Temple, incited by the mere mention of oyster-patties, went off to her *boudoir*, where such dainties were accustomed to be served.

That March, A.D. 1850, was a very cold one; it set in fair and soft, and spring-like; it went out in snow-wreaths, and east winds, and cold thaws! As a matter of course people generally were troubled with influenza and bronchitis, and among them Mr. Temple. He came home one day from the British Museum Library chilled and wan, and terribly exhausted. Dinner was supposed to be ready, but was not, and the mistress of the house idly commented on the remissness of the cook; perhaps if she had been a little more vigorous herself, the cook might have studied punctuality.

Assured that dinner was ready to be served, Mr. Temple did not resort to any *impromptu* measures; but the minutes sped on, and no dinner was announced. He grew fainter and fainter, and when at last the meal was placed upon the table, he was too far gone to enjoy it. He went early to bed, declaring that he felt thoroughly ill, and Mrs. Temple drank her tea alone, wondering at her husband's selfishness, and at Madame Gerard's want of consideration, for she, too, had a violent headache, and had retired, when her patroness sent for her to preside behind the urn. The

next day the medical attendant of the Temples had to be summoned. Mr. Temple was extremely ill. His complaint was inflammation of the lungs, and his throat was in a fearful state.

Another day, and another wore on, and then Mr. Lee, the family surgeon, startled Mrs. Temple by calling in a notable physician. A few more hours, and she was destined to a still more terrible shock:—"Miss Temple and Miss Bertie must be sent for, if they would see their father living!" and a messenger was immediately despatched to Chalfonts. Little did Amy and Bertie suspect how rapidly sorrow was travelling towards them, as they slept sweetly and peacefully that night under the shadow of the "everlasting hills."

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN INTERIOR.

FROM the day that Gerald Thurston took possession of his charming little sitting-room he recovered rapidly; so rapidly that even Dr. Wilson was astonished, and concluded that it would take a very great deal of killing of any sort to finish up his patient. He had been ducked and drowned, and dashed on the rocks, and beaten against the fishers' stakes, and that on a night when the thermometer was below freezing point; his flesh had been bruised and torn, his muscles and sinews strained and tortured; his nerves, if he had any, violently shocked; he had been tossed and tumbled, and seethed in the bitter brine, and frozen, and generally battered; in short, he had suffered enough to bring many men suddenly to the grave, and certainly enough to lay most men low for

many a weary month, if not to render them invalids for life. And here he was getting well in an unprecedented fashion; and if Dr. Wilson had calculated upon having him in his hands for an indefinite period, he would have been sorely disappointed.

The wild snow-storms in which blustering March went out that year had died away, the wind had suddenly changed into the south; the deep snows melted from the lower hills, only in the highest mountains they lay in streaks and patches, and only in the sunless defiles lingered the drifts, which, however, were imperceptibly diminishing in the warm, soft breath of spring, and the golden light was dancing on the restless channel waters, and at low tide the broad, wet sands were dazzling to behold; there was a flush of life upon the leafless woods, and here and there green buds were shooting, and early flowers were smiling shyly in the freshening grass. It was indeed a time of joy and brightness, especially to those whom sickness had enchained for many weary weeks; a time of gladness, when Nature, awaking from her long and dreary sleep, rose up arrayed in delicate sheeny robes and glistening jewels, all radiant smiles, and dewy, happy tears, as low, sweet promise of the summer-time to come. Never before had Gerard Thurston felt so quietly, calmly happy, so thoroughly content. For the first time since his childhood he could rejoice in the fair April sunshine. The sparkling waves, the fleecy clouds that swept across the blue expanse of sky, the grey rocks, with the glowing sands below, and the tender emerald tint above them and around, the silvery wings of sea-birds flashing to the land, the lark's clear ringing song, the gradual flush of colour and beauty stealing over the landscape, gave to his heart a thrill it had not known for years and years—how many he scarce could tell; it seemed so very long since youth had deepened into manhood.

But now again, as in old time, it seemed to him that

sea, and shore, and woodland were "apparelled in celestial light;" once more there seemed consolation for the wintry past, and happy promise for the future day. No wonder that hour by hour he gathered strength and health; that his eye regained its light, his pulse its healthy beat, his hand its steadiness, his heart its hope. He came downstairs one bright, warm April afternoon, another man than he who had gone forth in the chilly February day, from lonely, silent Canonbury Holt. He knew that a new life had come to him, that the winter was past and gone, that the time of flowers was come again, that the voice of the turtle was heard once more in the land—the land wherein *he* dwelt. Oh! blessed spring of hope renewed! of joy, new-born as it were, from the dust and ashes of the tomb! of dawn, after a long, impenetrable night! of sweetness, after gall and wormwood; of healing draughts, after the exhaustless cup of bitterness.

He scarcely needed James's supporting arm, when for the first time since that fateful—he could not, would not call it *fatal*—day in February, he came again into the lower regions of the house. As he crossed the wide, low-raftered hall—for the broad, black-balustered staircase and the parlour were on opposite sides—Judy contemplated him in awe and wonder; she knew what "tiding-in" meant; and "it was all one to her," she declared, "as if Mr. Thurston had risen from the dead, like Lazarus, as come out of his grave four days after he was buried." Somehow, it always seemed to Judy as if the master of Canonbury Holt had been to the other world and come back again!

He had got quite used now to being cared for and petted, and it did not seem strange to him, as it would have done two months ago, to find himself comfortably settled on the sofa, ministered to by gentle, womanly hands, and tended by thoughtful, womanly consideration. He looked round him, when he was fairly established in

his new quarters, and thought that the picture before him was one of the fairest he had ever seen; nay, the very fairest that his eyes had ever looked upon. It was a large room, that common sitting-room of the Musgraves, and it would have been called the "drawing-room" in any family more pretentious, but Mrs. Musgrave and her children preferred the old-fashioned term, and spoke of it as the "*parlour*." The furniture was good, and even handsome, but decidedly not modern. Anne's rosewood pianoforte was almost the only thing in the room that was not older than herself. The carpet was of faded Brussels, woven in the days when Brussels *was* Brussels, and one carpet lasted people for a lifetime! but bright-tinted, soft wool rugs were scattered here and there, and took off any air of shabbiness, and added largely to the general comfort. There was a lavish distribution of footstools, and several old-fashioned but luxurious rocking-chairs; the window curtains and the table covers were of a rich full crimson, the ornaments on the high carved mantelpiece were few, but unexceptionable, and on a curious antique sort of chiffonier was arranged some valuable china. Books, music, and ladies' work made Holt Farm parlour look homelike and cheerful; far more cheerful, more presentable, Gerard thought, than any of the desolate state chambers of Canonbury Holt.

Mrs. Musgrave sat knitting by the hearth in her accustomed seat; she knitted, James declared, for all the parish, if not for all the county. Anne was busy putting the finishing touches to a water-colour drawing, and Lyulph was quite distracted between the sense of duty, which led him to crouch in solemn devotion beside his master's sofa, and his inclinations, which attracted him to slumber at Anne's feet. Amy and Bertie were absent; they had walked into Chalfonts to see their friends at the Rectory, and they had hinted that they might not come back to tea. Amy wanted a talk with Jessie, and Bertie

had a hundred things to say to Clara; and if they were late, James was to come and fetch them. So mother, and daughter, and guest, and hound, had it all to themselves, for James quickly went away to attend to his own matters.

Tea was over, and the red sunbeams were slanting on the crags of Earnseat, on the opposite side of the Estuary, when Judy came in to say that the "missus was wanted; for the missus from the Duchess's School had something pertikeler to say to her!" Mrs. Musgrave left the room, and Anne worked in silence at her drawing till it became too dark to see the colours; then she put away her palette and brushes, and came and stirred the fire, that only needed a judicious poke to rouse it to a cheerful blaze; and finally she sat down on one of the low stools to warm her fingers that were rather numbed from working so long near the window. How very comfortable that room looked in the quiet gloaming, the firelight shining on the polished oaken furniture, the clear grey sky and the fading clouds of sunset yet visible through the ruby-curtained windows, and the gentle but rather stately figure on the hearth!

Mr. Thurston drew himself up and began to warm his fingers also, out of pure absence of mind, for they were anything but cold. But his action awoke Anne from her reverie, and she remembered that he was an invalid, and her mother had been very anxious that the room should be kept at a proper temperature that day, on account of her patient's being downstairs for the first time since his accident. She hastened to apologise:—"Oh! Mr. Thurston! I am so sorry I have let the fire get low, and mamma said you must be kept warm—are you very cold?"

"Not cold at all: I believe I held out my fingers to the blaze because you were holding yours—feel! I am quite comfortably warm."

And for the first time Gerard touched Miss Musgrave's

hand; it was but a touch, it could be scarcely called a clasp, though the thin, long fingers did close for a second over Anne's soft palm; but it brought the colour to the girl's cheek, and quickened Gerard's pulses, as he remembered vividly the last time when he had held a woman's hand in his.

"I shall never be able to thank you sufficiently for all your goodness to me," he said, presently, while Anne was still intently watching the shadows and flickering flame.

"Then do not try," she replied, cheerfully. "Set thanks are as disagreeable as congratulations and condolences. My mother knows that you thank her. I know that you thank us all. Let that suffice."

"I do indeed from my heart thank you; but I too do not care for expressed thanks; it is better to live one's sentiments than merely to utter them, is it not?"

"Generally, *yes!* not always though. I think we should show forth our praise with our lips and with our lives."

"I have heard that before; is it in the Bible?"

Anne smiled. "No; it is in the Prayer-book, in the Thanksgiving Prayer; you heard it at church."

"I remember now; but I am such a heathen. I had not been inside a church for years before that Christmas-day! The last time was—when—never mind, let 'last times' be forgotten! Miss Musgrave, do you recollect what you said to me the evening before, when I met you on the salt-marsh?"

Anne's clear glance at once was raised to his. "Yes! I told you that God had preserved your life, and that therefore it must be of value; that *He*, your Father in heaven, had work for you to do."

"And I asked you what sort of work mine could be. I put the question rather caustically I am afraid."

"Did you? I thought you put it in simple earnest. But you know I could not tell you your work, Mr. Thurston; only God and your own heart can do that!"

"Do you know, Miss Musgrave, I am beginning to believe in God?"

He expected she would say she was glad, he even looked to see a beam of pleasure lighting up those soft, grave, lustrous eyes; but without lifting her glance she replied quietly, "You *always* believed in God, Mr. Thurston!"

"You are mistaken; I believed in Him once, just through accident, just because I was not born a Pagan! Then God forsook me when I needed Him most. He hid His face from me. I called upon Him in the day of trouble, and He did *not* answer me, Miss Musgrave, so I ceased to trust Him. Can you wonder?"

"Yes, I do wonder; it seems to me so awful a thing for a human creature to try to stand alone without God; so desolate, so miserable a position! Mr. Thurston, how do you know that God did not hear you?"

"He heard me probably, but He did not answer me; perhaps I asked amiss. Perhaps I asked for that which might have been my destruction; perhaps I asked for the desired good, as a tramping beggar woman one day asked me for alms—insolently, defiantly, claiming, as her right, that which I had to bestow. It is a good while ago, but I think I can remember asking God to grant me certain favours in very much the same spirit. Now, common sense and good taste enjoin that the suppliant should be humble."

"And perhaps you were not patient? God often withholds for a time that which He will some day grant—just as we defer giving to children that which they request, till they are better fitted to receive it. Even *we* can see further than the children; we can judge of what is good for them so much better than they can judge for themselves, poor, innocent little things. How much more, then, shall God, who is All-wise, All-merciful, judge for us, who cannot tell the right path from the wrong, who know not what a day may bring forth, who in utter blindness of soul

sometimes cry for the very thing that would hurt and ruin us?"

"Well, Miss Musgrave, whether I ever believed in God before, or whether now for the first time I believe in Him, there is the simple fact—*I do trust in Him!* I am sure now that it was He who sent you to me that dismal evening when I was entangled in the marsh; and He it was who rescued me from death that night on the shore. I shudder when I think of it—that awful darkness, that bewildering sleet, the roar of the angry waves gaining on me like a pack of furious wolves, the black, bitter water dashing against my breast, and chilling my heart, and seething at my very lips! I had thought till then I did not care for life; I had told myself a thousand times that death might come and welcome; I would go forth and meet him, whom men call the King of Terrors, with unflinching courage. But it is one thing to feel sick of the world, wearied of one's existence, longing to have done with it all, thinking only of rest, of the grave's unbroken slumbers; and another to stand face to face with the foe who is stealing your breath, and freezing the warm blood in your veins, and causing your pulses to vibrate in mortal anguish under the pressure of his cruel icy grasp! I never courted death; I never, even in my most miserable moments—and I have been very, very miserable, Anne, as sad a man as ever lived—I never contemplated suicide, that leap in the dark, that refuge of the feeble, that insane alternative of the idiot, the coward! But many a time I have thought how pleasant it would be to lie down with one's burden of cares, and lose one's self in quiet sleep from which there should be no awakening. I think so no longer!"

"I am glad of that. Life is God's good gift; it need not be all sad, and even its deepest sadness may be mingled with much joy."

"Miss Musgrave, do you believe in a *God-deserted man?*"

"*No!* a thousand times—NO! The infinite heart of the Divine Father cannot change! He loves His children; He has formed them that they may enjoy eternally; He has made them a little lower than the angels, and crowned them with glory and honour. He has given to them eternal life. Oh, no! *God never failed one human soul* that looked to Him for help and comfort."

"But some *have* looked in vain. The help has come too late; the comfort has never come at all."

"It may seem so; but things are not what they seem. Who sees the whole of any man's experiences—who knows all the yearnings of his heart? One may be helped and comforted, and one's dearest and nearest know nothing about it. Besides, why should we presume to judge of God's intent from *one* aspect of His dealings? If a man writes a grand book, that teaches us the meaning of many mysteries, and gradually unfolds the secrets of some great science, or some sublime philosophy that we have hitherto failed to comprehend—should we, knowing and feeling in our hearts that the author was indeed worthy of the work he had undertaken, be content to read the opening chapters, and then pronounce our judgment? By reading only these we should probably be more bewildered than ever; for the master-mind gradually evolves out of chaos and obscurity, light and system, and a perfect beauty. And we are books written by Almighty Hand: we each have our own story, and the greater part of it is written in cipher which only the hero of the tale and the Divine Author can comprehend. I cannot clearly read the pages of your book; you cannot quite read mine! Nor is that all; life does not end when the book seems finished, neither is the tale complete. It is only in the clear, full sunshine of eternity that we shall read aright many a story that has terribly perplexed us here; it is only *there* that the history will be complete. I dare say the story of the beggar at the rich man's gate seemed a dismal one enough to

Dives, while he was wearing his purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day; but even while the man was suffering and starving, the angels who were waiting to carry him into Abraham's bosom judged differently; and the time came when the rich man read the last chapters of Lazarus's story, and also read his own to its very close. Perhaps he and countless others once thought Lazarus a 'God-deserted man.'"

"Certainly one cannot judge of any work until it is complete; the fairest beginning may come to nought at last; out of apparently base material and much confusion, order and perfection may eventually be wrought. I have been wrong, Miss Musgrave; I have called the day an evil day, because the morning was cold and threatening, the noon tempestuous, and the early afternoon grey, chill, and wearisome; I forgot that the evening might be bright, and calm, and full of sunshine."

"It will be, I feel sure of it," said Anne, scarcely knowing that she spoke the words. But her cheeks glowed, and her sweet eyes shone: was it a sort of prophetic instinct, she wondered, that made her thus forget herself, and speak as if involuntarily? As such Thurston accepted it from that moment; he felt that he could start afresh, take up the tangled threads of his sorrowful life where he had hopelessly laid them down, and place them in God's own hands to disentangle them, and unravel all their knots, and join their broken strands, and weave them finally into such glorious tissues as the angels might desire to wear.

"And now about my work," he said cheerily, after the two had kept silence a little while; she abashed at her own free outspokenness, he thinking of a future; of—

> "a peaceful day,
> A day not cloudless, nor devoid of storm,
> But sunny for the most, and clear and warm."

"What about your work, Mr. Thurston?"

"Only that I am going to do it when I find out what it is. Where *is* my vineyard, Anne?"

"Nay! but I told you I dare not answer such questions! It seems to me *here*, at Canonbury Holt, at least; but it may be somewhere else. Perhaps you had no right to come here; perhaps you came here *only to please yourself*."

"Suppose I did come to the Holt only to please myself?"

"Your coming then would be a mistake probably. Mamma says it is best never to make changes for ourselves, but to wait and let circumstances shape themselves, and so find out the indications of Providence."

"Would that be quite a safe mode of procedure in ordinary cases? Would it not be a little like *fatalism?*"

"No! fatalism and Providence are so widely apart. Fatalism is for heathens, for infidels, for lost spirits; Providence is for *Christians*. And Christians must just ask to be *guided*, and then look diligently for the clue that God is sure to put into their hands, and then take up the clue and meekly follow it."

"I should like to ask you one question; may I?"

"Of course; I need not answer it, you know, unless I choose!"

"Certainly not; but I hope you will answer it. Have you ever had any difficulties yourself? Have you ever wanted the *clue* you are speaking of?"

"Only in little things. I have never had any great trouble. Papa's death of course was a bitter sorrow, but I was very young; my grief, I think, was reflected mostly from mamma's—at least, after the first wild, passionate burst was over. Of course I have had difficulties; and though small ones they seemed not small to me. But I know what you mean, Mr. Thurston; I have never had any dreadful, crushing sorrow. I have read and heard of how the very light and joy of life can be dashed out; how

one may be left on earth without any earthly hope! with only—if one *may dare* say ONLY—God's presence in the soul, and the hope of the world to come!"

"I pray God you may never know such sorrow."

Anne's heart suddenly grew cold. Was it that strange prescience which comes to some of us at times, warning us of the shadows that are swiftly, silently, stealing on our placid sunshine? It was all very well for her to preach to others about faith, and hope, and patience! She, who had never been really tried, might well be cheerful and trusting, might well feel her heart overflowing with thankfulness and praise! How would it be when instead of "*Te Deums*" should be "*Misereres?*" How would it be to know that the glad strains of life's "*Jubilate*" were for ever hushed, and that only it remained to sing in the grey, quiet eventide, a chastened "*Nunc dimittis!*" What would it be if the fair rose-petals fluttered to the ground, and only the piercing, wounding thorns of the bare stem remained? What if the sweet, pure wine of calm content and quiet home happiness should be suddenly spilt upon the ground, and her cup filled up with a bitter draught that she must slowly, shudderingly exhaust, ere her trembling lips should cease to press the chalice? Never before had the possibility of suffering seemed so agonising! never had the whispering voices that foretold the coming tempest spoken so mournfully and so certainly! But she remembered how One in mortal anguish had once prayed, "O, my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." What the cup might contain she could not tell. She knew only that till now she had walked in calm, soft sunshine, knowing neither the fervid heat that *burns and strikes* as with a fiery bolt, nor the icy tempest that sweeps desolately on its way; but what might not the future, the *near* future, bring? If it brought pain and misery, how would she, the untried one, who had ever lingered in

green pastures, and by still waters, bear the change? Ah! already she was faithless, already the spirit of distrust was casting its cold gloom upon her path. Oh for strength to say sincerely, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation!"

CHAPTER XIX.

THE SETTING MOON.

It was rather late when Amy and Bertie came back from the Rectory. James had been to fetch them as agreed, and of course he had been kept to talk to Dr. Redmayne, but he resisted all entreaties to stay supper, Mrs. Musgrave and Anne having promised to wait for them. It was about half-past nine when their voices were heard without, and presently they came in, talking fast and declaring they were more hungry than they had ever been in all their lives before. Amy especially was in the highest spirits; she had spent a very pleasant evening, in giving Jessie a full, true, and particular account of all the young men, who were at that moment in London, dying for her sake, and the two girls had carried on a *sotto voce* conversation in the window-seat, while Clara and Bertie were playing duets for the good doctor's benefit, standard overtures and classical sonatas and concertos, which he accompanied, with no little taste and skill, with his violin. Bertie wondered greatly how so clever a girl as Jessie could possibly listen to so much nonsense! but upon

second thoughts she decided that it must be because the two beauties could not assimilate. Amy had from the first shunned Clara, and spoken slightingly of her good looks, and Clara had instinctively perceived that her advances were not welcomed, and, therefore, had naturally taken to Bertie, which was very generous of her, as she really liked James Musgrave very much herself. Somehow it came to be an understood thing that Amy and Jessie should be considered special friends, while Clara paired with Bertie; and Amy, in her character of Miss Temple, had that evening invited Jessie to return with them to Kensington; and anyone listening near the deep window recess in which the girls were talking would have heard, as the winding up of the conversation, "Very well, then! I shall write and tell mamma you will come back with us. I suppose the doctor and Mrs. Redmayne will not object?"

"I do not think they will, but would not Mrs. Temple like to be consulted?"

"Oh dear no; mamma never likes trouble, so we never consult her about anything; we just tell her what we are going to do, and very often what she is to do herself, and it is all right. Papa will be delighted, I know, because you are such a dreadful book-worm; you will be able to talk to him in his own fashion, for papa really is, you know, a very clever man, a celebrated man, I may say—only he has so much energy. Dear me, Jessie, everybody is horribly *energetic*, as they call it—turbulent. I should say Anne is very quiet, but she is always doing something, or planning something; a season in town would do Anne a world of good, it would tone her down and give her *repose*. One may be quiet in a certain way, yet lack repose!"

Jessie privately wondered whether Amy meant *languor;* she was getting very tired of her companion, nor was she at all sorry when Bertie went upstairs to put on her

bonnet, and Amy felt that she must follow. Miss Temple's star was certainly in the ascendant, or she thought so, which comes to the same thing; for scarcely had they exchanged adieu at the rectory gate, and set out on their homeward way, when Dr. Wilson came sauntering up the road, and James straightway invited him to come to the Farm, and take his supper with them; which invitation was at once accepted—to Mr. Musgrave's secret joy, for of course the good doctor offered his arm to Amy, and the lovers were left to their own blissful *tête-à-tête*. And Amy was delighted, for the chance of a flirtation, even though it were only with a stout country M.D. of forty years of age, gave her fresh life and spirits, and she straightway prepared all her battery of little fascinations. Alas! Amy's chief weapons of assault and conquest were scarcely available; for though the moon shone brightly, and the white road reflected back her beams, moonlight is not so becoming to a very delicate complexion, and blue eyes, and golden hair, and *petite* features, as gas-lights or wax-lights in a theatre or ball-room; and Amy's conversation was decidedly not very brilliant, and the doctor, if he had not been a truly benevolent man, would have fallen back upon the lovers, and interrupted their pleasant talk; but he had a conscience, and he did as he would be done by, and he thought to himself what a lucky fellow James Musgrave was to win such a charming, sensible, good-tempered girl! Also, what an unfortunate man he would be, who should for his sins woo and wed the silly, pretty coquette now leaning on his arm, and asking him a hundred foolish questions, which he answered to the best of his ability.

"Three more weeks, four at the outside, and we *must* go home!" Bertie was saying. "Oh, James, how I have learned to love this place! it is hard to leave it when it is just flushing into beauty; not but what it has been beautiful ever since we came, but now summer is coming, and

I should have liked to see those woods all brilliantly green."

"I mean to go back with you, Bertie, if your papa does not come to fetch you; I must have a comfortable talk with Mr. Temple; also, Bertie, love, I want to win over your mamma. Besides, a week or two in town will do me good; I am afraid I am a rough fellow for you, my darling!"

"I do not want you to be other than you are."

For which pretty speech James testified his gratitude in his own way—the way of lovers since the world began, or at least since the first pair of sweethearts took to courting. Dr. Wilson was not sorry when he reached the well-known garden gate, and saw the light streaming cheerfully through the ruby-coloured curtains of Mrs. Musgrave's parlour. He was tired of Amy's languid, discursive chatter, and he thought he smelt a savoury smell; also he beheld Judy steal round the corner of the house, with a frying-pan in her hands, which she brandished wildly, as she looked up to the moon. Then she began to execute a sort of war-dance on the moonlit greensward, an eccentric *pas seul*, to an original melody of her own improvisation, something between an ancient Border ballad, with the touch of a *coronach* in it, and a minor Gregorian chant. The whole party, under the shadow of the great yew, paused to contemplate Judy's recreation. Shriller and shriller grew the canticle, more and more madly flew the frying-pan, higher and higher Judy cut her capers, till an irrepressible laugh betrayed the vicinage of bystanders, whom the spirited young woman at once conceived to be marauders, intent on robbing the hen-roost, or, perhaps, the Farm itself, though thieves were as scarce at Chalfonts and throughout the whole Bekanks peninsula as money was at Cockleham, where no one above the rank of the poor flookers and cocklers had their home. With an unearthly shriek, that startled all the echoes of the place,

Judy launched her frying-pan—and it was redolent of lukewarm grease—into the midst of the discomfited group beneath the tree, and then, with the speed of a hunted hare, she flew into the house.

Happily the missile fell a little short of Mr. Musgrave's head, or Dr. Wilson might have had another patient. It did sweep the skirts of Amy's silken robe, and there left its mark abidingly:—"all oil and colley, as no turpentine would never quite get out," Judy said afterwards, when she triumphantly related her adventure to her old companions at the school. Judy did not like Miss Temple, because she was "so *mim!*" Miss Bertie was the idol of her idolatry, and she really hoped to be engaged as cook when the new household should be formed.

"Now really, Mrs. Musgrave, really, Miss Anne, I gave you credit for more prudence," said Dr. Wilson, when at last he found his way to the fireside of that familiar, comfortable parlour; "here is my patient talking and laughing when he ought to be asleep! his first day downstairs, and out of bed at this hour, and I emphatically prescribed due caution and an early retirement. This is how doctors are obeyed when their backs are turned, and then if there is any relapse they get all the credit of making an imperfect cure! Fie! fie! Mrs. Musgrave, I shall lose my confidence in you."

"Really, doctor, it is not my fault," said Mrs. Musgrave, apologetically; "Mr. Thurston is getting beyond my hand; I told him to go to bed an hour ago. I even rang for Swingleswairy, and the poor fellow came bowing and cracking all his finger-joints, and his master dismissed him. What was I to do?"

"Madam, you ought to have extinguished the lamp, taken off the fire, and retired yourself to another apartment. Left to solitude, cold, and darkness, the patient would have quickly come to terms. I am sorry you seem no worse, Mr. Thurston!"

"Really I could not have proceeded to such extreme measures," returned Mrs. Musgrave; "and after all, doctor, if Mr. Thurston is not worse, and he does not *look* the worse, what does it matter? But you said you were furiously hungry, and here you are scolding instead of sitting down to table. James, be good enough to take your seat, and carve the dish before you; Mr. Thurston and I require our supper if other people do not."

Now, the doctor, who had liked the savoury smell from the first, knew how to appreciate a good supper, and what gentleman of forty and upwards does not? It is astonishing how the prospect of an abundant, well-cooked meal subdues most people, breaking off hasty arguments, interrupting pleasant chats, stopping angry confabulations—in short, smoothing down all sorts of differences, and difficulties, and incompatibilities; for every healthy person wants to eat and drink, and even lovers cannot exist for any length of time on moonlight and roses, and sweet vows, and mutual protestations. It has been said that when two women begin to quarrel politely, that is, when any matter is at issue between them, and they want to "*have it out*," as they graphically say, "nothing but dinner or a thunderstorm can stop them." And I believe it! And further yet, dinner will do it, when a thunderstorm is lightly heeded.

Supper is quite as effectual as dinner, when people are of simple habits and keep early hours, and so Mrs. Musgrave found it; she helped her esteemed friend to the merrythought and the liver-wing of one of her own plumpest, tenderest, most delicately-flavoured capons. Anne added mashed potatoes, unequalled gravy, and unexceptionable bread-sauce; James contributed a rosy slice of the finest ham imaginable; Bertie handed a piece o home-made bread, and the servant in attendance filled up a glass of foaming home-brewed ale; and the doctor, though he always declared that suppers, and especially hot suppers,

were injurious, and to be eschewed, was not inclined to add practice to precept; on the contrary, he ate and drank, and was comforted in his inner man, and he scolded no more, but carried on a very animated discourse in spite of the lateness of the hour, till even Mr. Thurston began to feel that it would have been more judicious on his part had he obeyed his kind hostess at nine o'clock and given himself over into the hands of his faithful, patient Swingleswairy, whose portrait Judy was at that identical moment endeavouring to sketch with a charred meat-skewer on the blank leaf of her Prayer-book.

The clock struck eleven, and Mr. Thurston, in spite of himself, yawned, and the doctor rose, protesting he had no idea it could be so late. But still the conversation went on for another quarter of an hour, and Amy was growing very peevish, for she did not like sitting up till midnight when nobody heeded her *beaux yeux* or listened to her silly little speeches. It was all very well to dance till four or five in the morning, and to linger in ball-rooms till the lamps paled in the growing sunshine; but it was stupid work to sit there spoiling her complexion and ruining her health, while an old doctor, a young farmer, and a horrible man, who looked as if he had murdered somebody and was haunted by his victim's ghost, talked about peat-earths, and marine-bogs, and mosses, and drainage, and possible railroads, and hœmatite-ores, and monkish legends, and archæology, for the conversation took an ecclesiastical turn at last, through Bertie saying something about the ruins of the famous Abbey in the Belladonna Valley.

How long they might have gone on discussing pointed arches, and corbels, and gurgoyles, Amy never guessed, for Mr. Thurston was getting animated again, and talking about the Cathedral of Cologne, which he seemed to know as well as if he had lived in it all his days. But suddenly there was a pause—everybody stopped to listen to a

strange, bumping noise that came nearer and nearer every minute.

"What can it be?" said Mr. Thurston, rising from his sofa; "Musgrave, your bull has broken loose, and is dragging the gate and gate-posts after him."

"The bull is as quiet as a lamb," returned Mr. Musgrave, who had a special affection for the Holt Farm *Taurus*, the terror of the neighbourhood. "If it were possible I should say it was a cart coming up the hill; but what can a cart want here at this time of night?"

"Smugglers removing their illicit goods," suggested Bertie.

"A phantom-cart driven by my ancestress, the Lady of the Mist; she is provoked at our scheme for draining the salt-marsh and the mosses," said Mr. Thurston, gravely. "Musgrave, whatever the thing is, it is coming *here*."

By this time James had opened the front door, and all the party save Mr. Thurston, at whom the doctor had privately shaken his fist, and Amy, who felt too injured to evince the smallest interest in what was going on, were crowding into the deep porch.

"It is certainly Clegg's omnibus!" exclaimed James, as a marvellously built vehicle, constructed to carry, or rather to huddle up four human creatures inside and none outside, drove up to the gate. In the dim moonlight—for the moon was now low on the horizon, and flooding the sands and the rippling sea with its mellow golden beams —they beheld a close, square carriage with four wheels, and a perched-up seat for the driver, stopping for passengers to dismount.

"It is surely a bathing-machine doing duty for an omnibus," whispered Bertie to James. "Do go and see who our belated visitors are!" As James went down the gravel walk, she turned to look upon the setting moon. It was only a glance, but she never forgot how the large, low moon looked, just dipping into the amber water far away.

She could just trace the outline of the mighty mountains rising up dark and spectral against the clear night-sky; she saw several ship-lights out at sea, and the usual signal-light at Levens Point, and, like a lustrous planet, the soft lamps of the lighthouse at Foudrey Pile, burning and glowing in the gathering darkness. And she could hear the deep roar of the channel-stream, and the angry barking of the farm dogs in the stable-yard, and presently a voice she thought she knew. All this she carelessly noted at the time; but long, long afterwards, whenever she remembered the shock, the grief, the wild confusion of that midnight hour, she saw again, distinct and vivid, as in a perfect stereoscopic picture, all the details of that solemn, dusky landscape. She saw the sinking moon, the faint ruddy light upon the darkening waves, the great hills, the desolate wild moors, the dreary mosses stretching away like mistland into the drearier expanse of sand, and that strange arrival at the garden gate. And she heard the floods lifting up their voices, the night-tide rushing back again to the great ocean—a deep continuous murmur, like low solemn thunder far away among the mountains; and she listened to the rustling of the budding branches, and the soughing of the soft April wind in the melancholy pine-woods of the Chase, and to that voice, at once familiar and unfamiliar, that was saying quite distinctly, "Let me see Miss Bertie." It all came over again in sharpened outlines and with strange distinctness, every time she thought upon that hour; it comes still with the hallowed memory of that great and sudden sorrow, it *will* come till thought and memory fail, and in the land beyond the sun, the land where moons wax and wane no more, where there is no more sea, and where God has garnered up for us the treasures that we clasped too closely in our foolish, loving hands, so that they withered and were "lost awhile," Bertie shall learn fully how fair a type of the glory to be revealed is this frail world's beauty, which

God Himself has given us as a pledge, and a faint foretaste of that beauty, and that joy, and that immortal blessedness which He has prepared for them who love Him in His Son, the only Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Another minute and she was in the middle of the group at the gate, and she had recognised an old servant, who had left Tylney House seven years before,—a favourite servant of Mr. Temple's, who had been assisted to marry and set up in a small way of business by him. The man had prospered, and now he kept a notable greengrocer's shop in Kensington, and he was a very thorough tradesman, devoted to his daily work of buying and selling fruits, and flowers, and vegetables! What brought him *here*—far away from his tidy little wife, and his one child, and his beloved stores of garden-stuff?—here, at lonely Chalfonts, where people came of a set purpose, or came not at all, if he came not as the bearer of ill news?

"Williams," said Bertie quietly, as soon as ever she had realised the fact of the man's presence, "Williams, something is the matter; you are come to fetch us home?"

"Yes, miss, more's the pity; they want you at Kensington."

"What is it, Williams?"

"The master, Miss Bertie; he's bad, terrible bad! and he do want ye and Miss Temple. The French madam that teaches the young ladies was to have come, but she could not be spared; she's good at the nursing is the Frenchwoman."

"I will get ready directly;—no, James, don't touch me, please," and Bertie's tone was piteous;—"let me go and tell Amy."

It took some time to make Amy understand what was required of her, and when she did understand she was very difficult to manage, and Dr. Wilson had to treat her for hysterics and faintness successively, till past two o'clock in the morning; meanwhile Bertie and Anne packed vigor-

ously, with scarce a word exchanged between them; then they all lay down to rest, though not to sleep; and then came the early breakfast, which was on the table before the sun's red beams had lighted up the dark brows of the Yorkshire fells; and then all the bustle of departure, for they were going to catch the first train that stopped at Farleton station; and the drive was long, and the road such as Londoners and people from the midland counties would have pronounced impracticable. When it came to the last good-byes it appeared that James was going with them; he could not bear that his Bertie should take the weary journey alone with the selfish, foolish little Amy, who was actually at that moment thinking more of her own discomfort and misery than of her father's danger.

Poor Bertie had been brave till then, but when James folded her cloak round her, when she felt his strong arm supporting her trembling frame, when she heard him saying, "I will go with you, darling! I will not leave you, Bertie! I will share your sorrow, whatever it may be!" she fairly broke down, and burst into a tempest of tears and sobs. It was well for her that she had this relief; she had borne the enforced composure quite as long as was good for her, and when the weeping was over, she felt really calmer, and more able to bear patiently the agony of suspense which she must endure till evening.

CHAPTER XX.

THE RIVER'S BRINK.

YES! it was a weary, dreary, seemingly interminable journey, and the train seemed never tired of stopping at lone stations, and the engine went plunging and throb-

bing on its way, ploddingly and *slowly*, Bertie thought, as if it would not hurry itself by one single revolution of the wheels, for all the anxious people in the world; but the locomotive was really going at its usual speed, for it kept to time pretty well all through the day, and Bertie sat leaning back, with closed eyes and sick heart, fretting at the tardy progress towards the south. She only looked out twice; once at Keirmouth,—no junction then, only a small solitary road-side station; where the high spring-tides come up nearly to the rails, and where at low water there is a wide and apparently boundless waste of sand; and once at Lunechester, to glance up to "Gaunt's embattled pile," and to say farewell to the mountains that were fading already in the blue-grey distance. Then she lay back again, painfully wide awake, but so benumbed and torpid that she could not bear the effort of keeping up anything like conversation.

Amy happily did go to sleep, nor did she fully rouse up till the day was far advanced—a state of things which both James and Bertie felt to be a blessing, since when awake she was decidedly troublesome, pouring out wordy lamentations, and wondering tearfully "what would become of *her*, if papa should die!" James administered sandwiches and biscuits, and sherry and water, and that certainly consoled her, for her pocket-handkerchief did far less duty afterwards, and at last she begun to talk over possibilities and probabilities, and to be pretty sure that Mr. Lee was making the worst of it, and that Williams knew nothing at all about the matter, only mamma and Madame Gerard had frightened him; and that papa, who was quite a healthy man, and not over forty-five, would quickly rally, and be quite well enough to go out with them when the season began, and people did say it would begin very early this year, &c., &c.

And she pattered on till they came almost on the outskirts of London, and then Bertie, whose agony of dread

was even worse to her than the suspense had been, told her fiercely she would leave the carriage at the next station, unless she ceased her heartless speculations; and Amy, cowed, as she always was, before Bertie's vehemence, relapsed into gloomy silence.

"Almost there, Bertie dear; take courage!" whispered James, as the train began to slacken speed.

It was sad to come to the familiar station, and find all going on as usual; the din, the bustle, the excitement, men moving to and fro, people rushing hither and thither, porters busy with their trucks, and friends meeting and parting; and themselves so sorrowful, so anxious, so changed at heart since last they bade farewell to London! It is one of the minor trials that always attend a great and bitter grief, that the world winds on its way as correctly as if nothing were the matter. Ah! the morning never wore to evening "but some heart did break," and each one must bear his own burden, and the less sympathy he exacts from those he encounters in the daily walks of busy life, the less wounded, the less disappointed he will be.

The evening was pale and grey, and rather chilly, for the wind had gone back since noon into the bleak north-east, and Kensington looked dull enough when at last the sisters reached the well-known neighbourhood.

Now that the end of the journey was so near, Bertie could have wished she was fifty miles away, so intense was her dread of the tidings that might await them. Even Amy was awed into apprehensive silence by the mute agony so visible on Bertie's still, white face. Oh, what a relief it was to find no sign of death about the house, no darkened windows; to see Hilda and Juliet watching eagerly from the drawing-room, as if for their approach.

In another minute Hilda was in Bertie's arms, and there was something desperate in the embrace she gave the

child, who was looking pale and languid, with dark circles round her eyes, as from watching and weeping continually. She literally dared not ask for news from the sick chamber; they were not too late, she saw; death had not come before them, but surely his cold presence was hovering about them; surely Hilda would not wear that anguished countenance if there were any hope. Hilda tried to speak, but she could only sob out, "Oh, Bertie, I am so glad you are come!"

"Why do you not say at once how papa is?" began Amy, fretfully. "You have no consideration, children; we are worn out with our journey! Only think, this time last night we were quite happy at Chalfonts, knowing nothing of what was going on here; and now you keep us in suspense, when we are half dead already! *Is* papa better?"

"*No!*" replied Hilda, very decidedly.

She could say no more, and it was Juliet who added—"He is very much worse; worse since the morning, the doctors say."

It was a painful meeting between the mother and daughters, for Mrs. Temple was at last roused from her apathy. She was not making any effort; passive she was, and would be to the last, but she was suffering as much as it was in her nature to suffer, and the impending dread, and a sense of her own helplessness, was overwhelming her. She wept for some time in Amy's arms, and then she turned to Bertie, and kissed her with effusion. Bertie's arrival was a great relief; the poor little woman had so much faith in her second daughter's resources, that she fondly hoped all would now go well. She had wished for Amy to talk to and to condole with, from the time the trouble began, but she had longed fervently for Bertie's presence.

"Bertie would know what was to be done; Bertie would be self-possessed; Bertie would forget nothing; and if the

worst came to the worst, there would be Bertie to fall back upon!"

Mrs. Temple did not seem in the least surprised to see James Musgrave, though she was secretly surprised to see so gentlemanly a person. She had expected something between a farm-labourer and a footman, and she was almost disappointed when her nephew greeted her with all due respect and courtesy, and spoke in an educated tone and with a cultivated accent.

"It was very good of him to take such a journey on his uncle's account," Mrs. Temple kindly said; but Amy interposed, with a sour—"Oh, it was on Bertie's account, of course!"

James had never seen her look so utterly unamiable at Chalfonts; he would have been amused had the occasion of his visit been less sorrowful.

"I cannot believe papa will not recover," she said presently to the girls, when they were sitting one on each side of her: "the doctors always try to frighten one; and Mr. Lee always was a melancholy-minded man, and he has influenced the physicians! We have had Dr. Armstrong, my dears; he came again to-day."

"And what—did he tell you what he thought?" whispered Bertie, with an eager look.

"He would not speak plainly, my dear; he said while there was life there was always hope, and that papa had a good constitution, as indeed he has! If it had been I, now, there would have been nothing to be surprised at. I, with my delicate nerves, and West Indian constitution, might well fall dangerously ill after a bad cold. It was only a bad cold papa had, nothing more. But he neglected it, of course; he always did neglect himself, and I must say it was very wrong of him, for he might have thought of me; he might have known it would be dreadful for me to be left a widow. A widow! *me* a widow: only think!"

"Don't, mamma!" cried Bertie, hoarsely; the thought of all that her mother's possible widowhood implied was more than she could bear. She went away to take off her travelling dress, and to prepare to see her father. At the school-room door she met a small pale lady in black, and she felt it must be Madame Gerard; but Madame had no good tidings to impart; the patient was sinking rapidly; the medical attendants gave no hope. She had only just left Mr. Temple's chamber.

"It is very, very good of you to take our place," said Bertie, earnestly; "we are most grateful, Madame Gerard."

"Indeed, I could not have acted otherwise," replied the governess, with some emotion. "Mr. Temple has been so very kind to me; he has made me feel that I am not quite a stranger here, and he promised to be my friend! And Mrs. Temple is so delicate, and you were away! I hope you do not think I presumed!"

"I think, from all I hear, you have been a ministering angel, Madame! A sister of mercy, certainly. Will you tell papa we are come?"

"He knows; he is ready to see you!"

"In five minutes," said Bertie; and, wringing convulsively the thin hand of the governess, she rushed away to her own room. To throw off her cloak and bonnet was the work of a moment; the rest of the time she spent kneeling by the bedside, in fervent prayer for strength and for self-control; and oh! if it might be, for that precious, precious life, that yet it might be spared, if only for a little while! Bertie was quite calm, when immediately afterwards she met Madame in the passage; and though her face was like marble when she entered her father's room, it was perfectly composed, and her voice was steady, and the hand she laid on his scarcely trembled, though every pulse was quivering, and every nerve was shaken by the effort to maintain a requisite tranquillity.

But Bertie saw even more plainly than Madame Gerard that the seal of death was on that beloved brow. Oh! what a change since they had parted at Chalfonts, five months before! The face, the dear familiar face, was beautiful still, but it was strangely spiritualised; there was the same broad white forehead, the same proud but delicately-formed features, the same sweet, firm mouth, and the same kind, earnest eyes; but over all was that grey ashen hue that settles once, and only once, upon the lineaments of those we love. Madame Gerard and the hired nurse withdrew, and the father and the daughter, who were so tenderly attached, were left alone together. Much that passed in that sacred interview Bertie never told to any one; at the close of it she fetched James, that together they might receive a few treasured words of love and approbation. And, with a feeble gesture, Mr. Temple placed Bertie's hand in her lover's, saying, in his sunk, worn voice, "Be very good to her, James! She will be a loving wife, as she has been a loving daughter."

All that night and the next day wore away, and still the shadow lingered, yet delayed to fall; but every hour the pulse grew fainter, the weary eyelids were raised less frequently, the features grew more rigid, the white, slender hands lay more listlessly on the counterpane. And Mrs. Temple sat awed and stricken by the bedside, and Amy and the other children came and went, but Bertie never left her post. Tearless and quiet she did all that could be done, and the all was very little now; sometimes she bathed the chill forehead with eau-de-cologne, sometimes she smoothed the pillows, sometimes she gave a little wine-and-water in a spoon. But at other times she held one nerveless hand in hers, kissing it fondly every now and then, and oh! feeling it grow cold and colder for all the pressure of her young, warm lips, and for all the clasp of her soft, loving fingers.

Mr. Temple's end was perfect peace. He knew in

whom he had believed; he knew in whom he had trusted, and whom he had served for many and many a year! And now that his feet were slipping over the river's brink, and the world, and all that was dearest to him, was fading from him, *he was not alone!* How could he be, since the Saviour never leaves His children in the dark, never leaves them in solitude to cross the deathly flood? When the sweetest tones on earth are hushed *He* speaks, and says, "It is I; be not afraid!" When the light of sun, and moon, and candle, and beloved eyes is withdrawn; when the shadows of the valley gather thickly round, *His* smile irradiates the gloom, and brightens all the way, till from the celestial land the glory is revealed, and He, the Lord, the King, the Saviour, the everlasting Friend, unveils His face, and there is joy for evermore! There was no struggle, no last dread agony; but the white, set features relaxed into a smile, an inexpressible sweetness stole over the sunken, wearied countenance, and Bertie knew that the spirit had left its mortal tenement. He was "for ever with the Lord:" they were left, a band of sorrowing mourners, to weep over their irreparable loss.

The night was gone, and the early day had come. Oh! what a day of days to him, who entered then on that new life that fears no dull decay, no fading from its prime, no sadness and no pain!—the life that knows no ending—the life to which the gates of that pale angel we name Death are but the happy portal. And Bertie, when she came afterwards to look her last—her last till God should call her Home—on the dear, honoured face she had loved so fondly ever since she could remember, tried hard to think how it was "better far" for him, whose warfare was accomplished, whose rest was won. But she, too, could not help crying out, in the anguish of her heart—

> "O God, to clasp those fingers close,
> And yet to feel so lonely!
> To see a light on dearest brows,
> Which is the daylight only!"

And then came the day of the funeral, and then Bertie and her sisters first realised in all its bitterness their sad bereavement. They felt that they were fatherless, and that their mother—the little, passive, shivering figure, lying on the sofa, clad in deepest mourning, with the close, white cap around its still fair, almost childish face—was in very truth *a widow*.

CHAPTER XXI.

LEFT COMFORTABLY.

THE days passed on at Tylney House, and April glided into May, and May, with all her green leaves and sunshine, blossomed into June, and it was the height of the season in the fashionable world. But what was "the season" to Mrs. Temple and her daughters? Mrs. Temple herself had already found it painfully fatiguing, and she had vainly wished that her five girls were five boys, or that out of the five, one only had been of the gentler sex, for then her duties as chaperone would have been far less onerous. Bertie had always declared, that "the season" was a toil and a foolish waste of time, and she had fought against some of its institutions vigorously; therefore it was to her as to her mother, a relief to be able to remain quietly at home, when all their acquaintances were rushing night after night, to ball, and concert, and opera, and to feel that they were doing the right thing, and that not the most worldly and season-serving person in West London, May Fair, and all Belgravia and Tyburnia included, could possibly reproach them with neglecting the duties of society. But Amy sadly missed the dissipation to which

she had grown accustomed, and she sighed mournfully when, in the soft twilight of the summer evening, she watched the carriages rolling by, and caught glimpses of their fair occupants in full dress, going, perhaps, to the very houses where she had visited last year. And now she must stay at home, and cover herself with black paramatta and heavy crape; now she must die of *ennui;* for the seclusion of Tylney House, with all the gaiety that was circling about it and near it, and yet never crossing its threshold, was much worse to bear than the unfashionable, and stupid, but still really animated life of rustic Chalfonts.

"In the country," she said, "one expected to be dull, but there were certain resources, and certain unaccustomed pleasures, such as they were, to while away the time, and then one got up one's health and good looks; but to be in town when every one was talking of parties and *petit soupers*,"—they were as much in fashion then as "kettle drums" are now—"and to hear of *belles*, and ravishing *toilettes* and eligible *beaux*, and probable engagements to be ratified at St. George's, Hanover-square, or down at people's own places in the country, when the season drew to its close—it was unendurable!" and Amy wished she were a Roman Catholic and could go into retreat for her year of mourning, and then she would not have her temper tried with all the glowing accounts she received from her most intimate friends, who, when they had nothing better to do, and were not too tired to chat a little, regaled her with the histories of their triumphs, and described the dazzling scenes of their conquests, till poor Amy's heart ached for her lost opportunities, and she grew peevish and fretful, till, as Hilda assured her, her nose was turning red, and sharpening towards the point!

"It is like What's-his-name!" she said one day to Bertie, when she was more depressed and out of sorts than usual; "like the man we learnt about, who was kept in a

lake by those dreadful, revengeful gods in 'Magnall's Questions,' up to his chin in the water and yet he couldn't drink it, and boughs of fruit hanging over him, that waved out of his reach whenever he tried to touch them; and so he died with hunger and thirst, with plenty to eat and drink about him! No! he did not die I suppose, for he had died, and was in the heathen hell: it would have been very shocking if it had been true!"

"Very!" said Bertie, gravely. "You are talking about Tantalus, I think; but surely, Amy, you do not mean to say that you would like to go into society at present; to be perpetually ringing the changes on dressing and dancing, and riding in the park, and flirting, as you did last year, and our dear father scarcely cold in his grave?"

"I could not go out, if I would," returned Amy, disconsolately, looking down upon her sable skirts; "nobody goes anywhere, except to church, in horrible paramatta, and deep tucks of crape! Such mourning as we are wearing is never seen, you know, except at very small friendly parties, where a few High-church parsons, or simpering evangelical curates, form the chief attraction; or perhaps a bishop from the Cannibal Islands, who has only just escaped being served up at luncheon, as *paté à la missionaire*, and comes back to tell the thrilling tale in Exeter Hall, and at demi-semi-religious tea-tables, to admiring dowagers in pious turbans, and fading spinsters, who have renounced all hope of matrimony, go in for red-hot Tractarianism, or milk-and-water Evangelical devotion! And I hate such parties; I would rather go to one of the Holt Farm harvest suppers; and yet one must either stop at home, or content one's self with such insane stupidity!"

"I should say stop at home, Amy; all the world would cry shame on you, if you tried now to return to your customary amusements."

"I suppose they would; you need not tell me that to

aggravate me, and I am not going to risk my reputation by going out when society says I must not. But it is all very well for you, Bertie; you never cared about parties and balls, and you have got a lover to whom you can write, and who writes to you; and in spite of the present gloom, you have a bright future to look to. You will have the husband you prefer; though I must say you have shown a very curious taste, and you will leave off fretting about Papa by-and-by."

"Hush! Amy,"—and Bertie's eyes filled with tears,—"you don't know how you pain me. It has been my great trouble that I could not help thinking so much about James, when I ought not to have had a thought for any one besides dear papa."

The Temples, you see, were still at Tylney House, and their establishment remained very much as it had been in Mr. Temple's lifetime. When his affairs came to be examined by his executors, it was found that he had made better provision for his family than might have been expected, considering that his income was so largely derived from his literary labours, and that his household had never been under very prudent management; and, moreover, that he was still, comparatively speaking, a young man. Literary men seldom accumulate a fortune by the time they are forty-five, they generally spend their gains pretty freely, or they are spent for them; indeed, the very circumstances which pertain to a brilliant literary career involve to some extent a lavish expenditure, and Mr. Temple had been generous always, in things both great and small; and no sooner had his name appeared in the Obituary of the *Times* than people began to speculate upon the probable situation of his widow and daughters, now that only the private income remained to them. The private income, however, was not to be despised; for it would have kept Mrs. Temple and her five girls from anything approaching even to straitened circumstances, though

they, accustomed to every luxury, and to the gratification of every whim, might have considered them such; but if they had been left to fall back upon Mr. Temple's own small fortune, and Mrs. Temple's marriage settlement alone, they would certainly have had to make far other arrangements than those they were now enabled to conclude. Mr. Temple had largely insured his life, also he had appropriated certain moneys every year, which he invested judiciously, and the interest of these investments, and the sum paid by the two Insurance Companies, made a very handsome addition to the family funds, so that Mr. Rankin, an old friend of the Temples, and the acting executor, was able to tell Mrs. Temple that she need not leave Tylney House, or to any great extent reduce her establishment, in consequence of her bereavement. All of which information Mrs. Temple took passively as usual, and as a mere matter of course: she had never thought at all about her income, or if she had thought, it had been to conclude that things would go on in their customary way. It had never occurred to her that there might be a grievous change, a dismissing of servants, a going into a smaller house, perhaps in a less eligible neighbourhood, a struggle to make both ends meet, when the husband and father could no more replenish the purses so often filled, so speedily exhausted. All Mr. Temple's affairs were arranged with perfect exactitude; there were no difficulties in his will, or in any of its provisions; everything was clear, simple, and plain, as plain as could be! He had ever held it to be a sacred duty to make such arrangements while in perfect health; he had seen families plunged into the very depths of distress and perplexity for the want of a little prudent forethought on the part of those who ought to have known better, of those who always *meant* to make all straight some day, but, in the mean time, life and health being strong within them, procrastinated, till sickness came and death, as they had

come to Mr. Temple, and the work that was to have been done "*some day*," was left for ever undone!

Now, Miss Amy, though inheriting so much of her mother's constitutional languor and easy temperament, and more than her mother's selfishness, had also a spice of her father in her. She could lie all day on the sofa, and declare everything to be a bore, and beseech everybody who came near her to remember her nerves, quite as well as her mother could and did; but unlike her mother, she sometimes, and very frequently, concerned herself about the future; and even before the funeral she had begun to distract herself with fears of what might be coming, and to shrink from the prospect of the retrenchment that common sense—of which she was not quite devoid—told her might be absolutely necessary. On the day that Mr. Rankin came to settle affairs, she was lying down in her room very poorly with nervous headache, so that it was evening before she ascertained how matters really were. She came down into the drawing-room about eight o'clock, and found there her mother, Bertie, Georgy, and Hilda. Juliet had been banished on account of her inveterate chattering propensities, and her well-known disposition to confide family secrets to the under housemaid. She was better since Madame Gerard had held sway in the Temple schoolroom; but she was still not to be trusted, and Madame had begged that she might always be pointedly sent away when private matters of any sort were to be discussed. Such a course of conduct towards her would really be the truest kindness, since nothing was so likely to repress her gossiping inclinations, and teach her the expediency of due reticence. Certainly, no severer punishment, no more thorough discipline, could have been devised. Madame had shown her judgment in pursuing this method with her pupil; loss of marks, and heaps of French verbs, and pages of *Numa Pompilius*, the corrective system which Bertie had tried in

vain, were not half so effectual as being desired to leave the room, while Hilda and Georgy could remain, "because something was going to be talked about that was not to be repeated."

Mrs. Temple was sitting on the sofa near the fire, and she made room at her side immediately for her favourite daughter.

"Well, it is all settled, Amy," she said complacently, stroking down her folds of crape. "Mr. Rankin has explained it all, and though I don't understand it, Bertie does, and she says it is all right; we need not make much difference."

"Then we are left comfortably?" said Amy, a pink blush of satisfaction stealing over her round, dimpled cheeks.

"We are left very comfortably, my dear!" returned her mother, with more energy in her tone than Amy was accustomed to hear; but then there are times when a little excitement must take the place of that "repose" which some people seem to live only to maintain and cultivate.

"I am sure I never thought dear papa had saved so much money," continued the widow, passing her broad-hemmed handkerchief before her eyes; "at least, I don't know that I ever thought about it. We shall do very well, my dears, very well indeed, though I shall be glad when we need not be so very black; and of course as long as I wear these dreadful caps, I can go out nowhere, and what will you girls do? I wish, Amy, you were married, and then you could chaperone Bertie. Really, I do not feel as if I ever could go into society again, it is so exhausting; and now that your poor dear father is gone, I dare say I shall have no heart for anything. Ah, my dears! you don't know what it is to be widows; may you never know it!"

"We must know what it is to be wives first," said pert Miss Hilda. "But, mamma, I tried your cap on this morn-

ing, and you've no notion how *piquante* I looked; I put my curls all back, you know, and got up a sort of only half-resigned expression, and the effect was really charming! I ran into the schoolroom to show myself to Madame Gerard, but she did not compliment me as I expected; she only told me to go back and rearrange my hair, and then come to German dictation. So I felt rather extinguished, but *vogue la galère.*"

"Hush, Hilda!" said Bertie, gently, "you are preventing mamma from speaking."

"I was only going to say, my dears, that I feel I shall be quite unable to go out with Amy and Bertie next year; and I really should like Georgy to come out early. She will never make anything of study, and girls do come out early now; and, by next May, Georgy will be almost sixteen and a half."

Georgy brightened up perceptibly, and as quickly subsided; for, though getting free from the schoolroom, and going to parties as her elder sisters did or had done till lately, was a most charming and greatly-to-be-desired combination, she suddenly remembered that she could not hope to see her beloved hairdresser in the circles of society *she* frequented; for society had such prejudices, and was so absurd! and she was more sure than ever that her Regent Street Adonis was a prince, or, at the least, a nobleman *in retirement!* The young man who came to church, with the beautiful eyes and the heavenly moustache, had suddenly disappeared. Perhaps he had turned Methodist or Quaker, or perhaps he had gone on his travels, or perhaps he was indisposed, but he came no more to distract Georgy's attention from her Prayer-book; so the handsome knight of the curling-irons reigned supreme and sole in the young lady's affections, only that she had begun to admire—simply to admire—her music-master, who had very foolishly and unprofessionally praised the symmetry of her white hands.

"But Bertie replied, in her own abrupt way, "I shall not go out again; you need not trouble yourself about me, mamma. Georgy can take my place, though I must say I think it would be only for her advantage if you kept her in the schoolroom two years longer."

"Do you mean you will not go out next year?" asked Mrs. Temple.

"*Demi-deuil* is so becoming," interposed Amy, in a tone of remonstrance. "I thought we might have white crape dresses, trimmed with bugles, or lavender silk skirts, with black velvet and crape bodices, by that time."

"You can have what you like, Amy, but I have made up my mind never to resume that style of life. I shall live quietly at home till I am married, and afterwards I shall not have many opportunities, I suppose, of cultivating what you esteem 'society,' unless, indeed, I am ever invited to Aldingham, or unless Mr. Thurston marries, and there are gaieties at Canonbury Holt."

"The more reason why you should make the best use of such opportunities as you have," sighed Mrs. Temple. Ah! Bertie, my misguided child, you will find out too late what it is to have married below your station."

"James is not below me in station," said Bertie, stoutly.

"I like him," burst out Miss Hilda. "He has no nonsense about him, and he *is* a gentleman, though he does not wear lavender kid gloves, and dandy patent-leather boots; for he is a Musgrave, and dear papa said the Musgraves were a good old stock; and I asked him if he would have me at the farm when he and Bertie were married, and he said I should come as often as I pleased, and stay as long as I pleased, and I should feed the chickens, and the calves too, if I liked! I don't think I should like to feed the little pigs, though they are very pretty when they are babies; but pigs are pigs, under any circumstances. Yes! I do like James Musgrave, and I am much

obliged to Bertie for giving me such a brother, for he is a regular *brick*."

"Does Madame Gerard teach you those very lady-like expressions?" asked Amy, coldly.

"If you would only be a little quieter!" said Mrs. Temple, pensively. "You are worse than Bertie; so impetuous, so inconsiderate, so wanting in repose!"

"Hilda!" was Bertie's calm but expressive comment. "I am much obliged to you for your opinion of James; I like that my sisters should appreciate him, and I am sorry that in this respect you should be in the minority; but if I were you I would not condescend to *slang!*"

"I suppose you allude to my saying a 'brick'?"

"Of course I do."

"Well, then, I won't say it again; he's a jolly good fellow, that is all."

Bertie smiled. "You do not much mend the matter, Hilda; but never mind, as you grow older you will learn better. In two or three years you will be ashamed of 'fast' expressions."

"I don't believe she ever will," said Georgy, languidly. "She is fast in everything she does; she brushes her hair in a fury; and you should see her clearing the table when it is her week to put the lesson-books away! It always makes me think of the whirlwind taking up the sticks, and straws, and things at Hyde Park Corner, on a wild March day."

"At least, no one can accuse you of being 'fast' in the sense you mean, Georgy; for you were never in a hurry in your life, I should think."

"I hope not," simpered Georgy, folding her hands affectedly. Since that unwise music-master had praised her soft round palms, and snowy, rosy-tipped fingers, she had been for ever disposing and re-disposing them on her black frock, in order to heighten the contrast. It was a mercy that the music-master was about as ugly as he could be. Had he

been as handsome as the hairdresser, there is no knowing how foolish Georgy might have been. "I never wish to be in a hurry," resumed Georgy, with a certain air of mild dictation that she sometimes used to Bertie and to Hilda; "*repose* is far better than hurry."

"What you call *repose* is too often mere idleness and self-indulgence, Georgy."

"Now, Bertie," interposed Mrs. Temple, "I will not have you teach your sisters to be curt and abrupt, and full of energy as you are yourself. If Amy and Georgy were like you and Hilda it would kill me I am sure; it was your poor dear papa's great fault, that he was always distracting himself about something. He was always doing something or other, or going to do it, or had just done it, and was expecting the results."

"Mamma!" said Bertie reproachfully, "if papa had not been energetic we should not have been as we are now, we might have been like the poor Delaneys, obliged to put up with genteel starvation, or go out as governesses."

"Well! I dare say it was all for the best," returned her mamma, complacently, "and we are left very comfortably, —*very comfortably!*"

"It would have been horrid to have been left uncomfortably," said Amy, quietly, "and I don't think any man ought to do it! It is wicked in a father not to leave plenty of money behind him. It is quite bad enough that he should go and die, without making his wife and children poor."

"But suppose he never had any money to save?" suggested Hilda; "suppose he had only just enough to live upon? And as for going and dying, no one does that! God takes them, Amy, and they can't help themselves. I think a man may be a truly good man, and yet leave his family in poverty."

"Hilda," said her mamma, "leave off talking, and re-

member that little girls ought not to contradict their grown-up sisters."

"There never was anybody that had so little money as to have none to leave," remarked Amy, as calmly as if she were stating a demonstrated fact: "everybody can get money, if they like."

"As a rule, yes," replied Bertie; "but then they must be energetic. 'Repose' won't do it."

"Pray don't talk about being energetic," interposed Mrs. Temple; "I am not equal to it. Georgy! go to the piano and play us something very soft, and slow, and soothing."

CHAPTER XXII.

A CUP OF TEA.

We have lingered at Kensington long enough; let us now return to Chalfonts, and its beautiful wild neighbourhood, and to the master of Canonbury Holt. He went back to his own home a few days after the sisters left the Farm, almost as soon indeed as James returned from London, and ever since he had been very busy, astonishing two people to the last point of their endurance—namely, Mrs. Twentyman and the Reverend Dr. Redmayne. Lyulph, too, was evidently puzzled, but he liked the change; though eminently a dog of a contemplative cast of mind, he was also delighted when activity took the place of ceaseless soliloquy and meditation. Swingleswairy was puzzled likewise, but a bustling, busy life was by no means to his taste; moreover, he thought his master must have lost his senses on that awful night; either the waves had partly washed away his intellects, or the fever that followed had impaired them.

The long-deserted rooms were being rendered habitable again, the ancient furniture was examined, and cleaned and repaired, the chapel was once more made weather-proof, ferns and mosses no longer grew in the groined arches of the shattered roof, and the grass was no longer underfoot, as one trod the shadowy, damp aisles. The grand altar tomb of Everard de Courcy was again restored, the broken wood-work was mended, the windows for the present were mostly boarded or canvassed up, for Mr. Thurston was going to London in the autumn to see a cunning artificer in stained glass, who sometimes had in his stock rare old casements brought from remote corners of the Continent.

What were Mr. Thurston's intentions in restoring the chapel no one exactly knew; the doctor thought he would appoint his own chaplain and have service there regularly for the Holt household, and for the immediate tenantry, but Mr. Thurston, when asked if this was what he meant to do, shook his head, and replied that he preferred attending the Priory Church. Further information he did not vouchsafe. "But this home-work," as Gerard called it, was only a small part of what was going on; the process of draining the marshes was actually begun; engineers and surveyors had come down from Easthambury, and the railway plans were beginning to assume a very positive and definite appearance. A great number of workmen were being employed; and, in directing them, in finding cottages and lodgings for them, in caring for them physically and morally, Gerard Thurston found the work he had to do.

People said Mr. Thurston's illness had done him good, for he was no longer the gloomy, stern, misanthrope who first came among them. Though a shadow rested still upon his face, and would rest there, he knew, while life should last, he no longer wore the air of a man who feels himself to be an Ishmaelite, and who buries himself in

unprofitable seclusion, from sheer distrust and dislike of his fellow-creatures. His very step was changed, the servants said; and so it really was. He trod the earth now more freely, more gladly; he loved to walk in the sunshine, to feel the summer breezes on his thin bronzed cheek, to scent the hay, that filled all the twilight air with its ambrosial fragrance, to see the wild flowers bloom profusely, radiantly, as they do bloom in that beautiful north land; to hear the "billowy anthem" morning, noon, and night, swelling and dying on that lonely shore! The world's glory was for him once more; once more for him creation wore her festal robes, of richest green, and blossoming coronal, and bright streaming sunshine! The crested silvery waves dancing underneath a cloudless sky, the purpling moors, the grey rocks tapestried with trailing ivy, and azure harebells, and tall, glowing foxgloves; the solemn mountains, steadfast, calm, and silent, chain after chain, peak after peak, rising in awful majesty along the blue horizon; and the stately Priory Church, with its glorious walls and lofty roof, and musical soft bells, were all to him sources of deep joy and gratitude; and he could say now what he had never said, or thought of saying, in the years gone by—

"Earth with her thousand voices *praises God.*"

It was a lovely evening towards the end of July, the close of a very busy day to Mr. Thurston. He had been settling his accounts in the morning; he had gone out at noon, and found himself the arbiter in a case which had arisen between one of the Duke's under-gamekeepers and Mr. Littledale, his Grace's steward. And Gerard had the pleasure of softening and, in the end, turning away the wrath of a well-meaning but rather unreasonable man, and saving an honest but rather foolish fellow from much present inconvenience and perhaps future misery. Then he was waylaid by a poor woman, who would not have

dared to accost him three months before; she and her husband lived upon the Holt lands and were miserably poor, being a sickly and not over wise couple, with a super-abundance of children and very little else within the four walls of their wretched hut. "And now," pleaded poor Meggy Dent, "my man is down wi' some sort o' illness, and he can't earn a penny, and hasn't these three weeks; and all t' meal be gone, and I haven't made a cake sin last Sunday was a week, and except for t' buttermilk and t' parritch, as Aggy Dawson gave me, we should ha' starved, Squire, indeed we should!"

And then Gerard found himself visiting the sick husband, whose complaint was chiefly weakness, and cheering him up, for he was a man of a very doleful spirit, who always saw the coming cloud, but never watched to catch its silver lining; and then he sent out one of the many children, who were swarming about, for food from the nearest shop which was about a mile distant; and *such a shop*, where they professed to sell tea, coffee, pepper, vinegar, tobacco, bread, and peppermint-lozenges! Whether they occasionally mixed all their wares together, and then weighed them out separately again, I do not know; but I can affirm that the bread always tasted of peppermint and coffee, and the coffee of pepper, and the tea of tobacco, while the vinegar combined all the flavours in itself! But, in spite of this, it was good to see the children dance round the heavy, squatty, dingy-coloured loaf which the eldest girl at last brought in. And with more words of comfort, and a shower of blessings pelted after him down the fell, Gerard went away, desiring Meggy to come in the evening to the Holt, for something more nourishing for the invalid. And this was not the first time he had found work of this nature; he had no need now to sit down and speculate as to what his tasks might be, for they came thick and fast around him, and the difficulty was rather how he should get through them all!

Then the afternoon had been spent on the great salt-marsh, where already a huge dyke was in process of formation; and then, as happened frequently now, he went up to the Holt Farm to ask Mrs. Musgrave to give him a cup of tea after his long hot walk and somewhat tiring day. Mrs. Musgrave, who had never quite relinquished her motherly oversight of the solitary master of the Holt, scolded him for doing too much, at which Gerard laughed; it was something so new to accuse himself of superfluous industry.

"But you are not quite strong yet; it takes time to get over such an illness of yours," she said, as she wheeled out one of her cosy arm-chairs for his reception. "Don't tell me, Mr. Thurston, you are looking pale! You shall have a cup of my best tea directly, and some meat with it; and you may finish up on those strawberries, the last we shall gather from our beds; they are what we call 'Late Pines,' and come in when the 'Queen's,' and the 'Sir Harry's,' and the 'Hautbois,' are over. And cook shall make you a girdle-cake; I have not forgotten your little weaknesses, you see!"

"But where are the others, Mrs. Musgrave? I saw nothing of Musgrave on the marsh this afternoon, though I wanted his opinion about the breakwater, and he knew I should be there, that we might consult together."

"My son was obliged to go to St. Ulpha's this morning; he was called there in a hurry; I believe he left some kind of message for you with Anne, if she met you anywhere about, or if you came in, as we quite expected, for a cup of tea."

"Indeed, my cup of tea is becoming quite an institution; but where is Miss Musgrave?"

"She had an early tea and went to Cockleham; that is her parish, you know! I sometimes tell her she saves the doctor the expense of a curate. But he ought to have a curate, Mr. Thurston."

"Ought he? How thoughtless I am! if he really needs one it is my place to find the means, I should say; but he has never said a word upon the subject, neither has Mrs. Redmayne."

"Can you not see that there is work for another clergyman in and about Chalfonts? The doctor *might* do much more, certainly, but he does not see the necessity of some things as we see them, and it is too late in life for him to begin on a new task. He is one of the old school, as you must have perceived, a really good man and very kind, but not exactly earnest in his vocation; his ideas of his duties are limited and narrow, and he rather dislikes progress, except in the 'service of song!' He would take any pains, or go to any expense, to organise a thorough and a faultless choir."

"Yes! I have found that out. Well! if a curate is desirable, a curate there shall be; but I suppose I must leave the choice of one to his reverence?"

"I suppose you must; but I think if you open your purse wide enough he will not reject any one whom you may propose. You do not like that cold lamb, Mr. Thurston; there is rabbit-pie in the larder."

"Indeed, I have fared sumptuously; have you heard lately from Kensington?"

"James heard this morning from Bertie; but they are not at Kensington now; they are at Saumerel, a little bathing-place on the coast of Normandy; they are all there—Mrs. Temple and her five girls, and several servants, and Madame Gerard."

"Who is Madame Gerard? She seems to be in possession of one half of my name!"

"She is the governess, and I should say, from all I can gather from Bertie's report, that she is a very superior woman. Mr. Temple thought very highly of her, and I believe, in his last illness, requested that she might remain the instructress of his younger daughters. Poor girls! they

need some wise person about them; for my sister-in-law is sadly delicate, and has not only a West Indian constitution but West Indian habits, and Amy is extremely like her. Madame Gerard seems just the person they required; she is not quite so accomplished as some ladies profess to be; she is particularly deficient in music, I believe, and can only teach the merest rudiments; but her French is perfect, also her German; and Bertie is reading 'Tasso' with her now, and says she is for the first time enjoying 'Gerusalemme Liberata;' so I suppose her Italian is also above the average!"

"She is a Frenchwoman, I presume?"

"No! English born, but she married a Frenchman; she is a widow, poor thing! and has lost her only child, and I should say has no home except what she gains for herself, as the fruit of her own labours. Bertie writes a good deal about her, for she is very much interested in her, and likes her greatly; she considers her presence in the house quite a blessing."

"She is a Protestant, of course?"

"Certainly! my dear brother would never have permitted a Romanist to occupy in his family so onerous a trust as hers. He had excellent testimonials from a Lutheran pastor in Paris, and also from a highly respectable barrister, living somewhere near town, whose daughters Madame Gerard had educated for several years."

"There are such impositions sometimes in the matter of religion, but you say this Madame is English and not French; otherwise, nothing could be easier for her than to obtain a dispensation from her confessor, and, for expediency's sake, represent herself as belonging to a Reformed Church!"

"I have heard of such things; but I believe there is no fear of anything of the sort in this case. Bertie says that Madame is not only a good and discreet person, but a

really Christian woman, and you know what I mean when I say *Christian?*"

"Yes; you mean something beyond mere national and educational belief; you mean something earnest, self-renouncing, *vital!*"

"Just so! And Bertie thinks, moreover, that the governess is even beyond an ordinary Christian. She has had great sorrows, though what they were no one knows, for she never talks about herself; her history is a painful one, no doubt. Indeed, the mere facts of her early widowhood, and her childless state, prove that she has been greatly tried. Whether married life was a happy one, Bertie doubts; but still, M. Gerard was her husband, and a woman of her stamp would never marry without a very strong attachment; and whether you believe it or not, Mr. Thurston, we women, having loved once, love on to the end, through injustice, and neglect, and unkindness, and suffering of every sort; and even death is not the conqueror when he comes. A woman is often as faithful to the memory of the beloved one as to the man himself."

"I do believe it now, Mrs. Musgrave, though I believe it in spite of myself; for I have known wicked, heartless, faithless women—and known them to my sorrow. I believe there is such a love as you speak of, and yet——"

"And yet, when all is said and done, Mr. Thurston, there *is* such love as

> "'quits not misery's side,
> Nor drops from guilt's its ivy-like embrace,
> Nor turns away from death's its pale heroic face!'

Listen, Mr. Thurston,"—and Mrs. Musgrave took up a library-book that she and Anne, as was their custom, were reading together—"I find here my own meaning better expressed than I can render it myself. Let me read you a passage that my daughter and I were struck with last night:—'I would have every woman marry, not merely *liking* a man well enough to accept him as a hus-

band, but loving him so wholly that, wedded or not, she feels she is at heart his wife, and none other's, to the end of her life. So faithful that she can see all his little faults—though she takes care no one else shall see them —yet would as soon think of loving him the less for these as of ceasing to look up to heaven because there are a few clouds in the sky. So true and so fond, that she needs neither to vex him with her constancy nor burden him with her love, since both are self-existent, and entirely independent of anything he gives or takes away. Thus she will marry neither from liking, esteem, nor gratitude for his love, but from the fulness of her own. If they never marry, as sometimes happens, God will cause them to meet in the next existence. They cannot be parted, they belong to another.'"

And laying down the book, Mrs. Musgrave came again to the table, and began picking strawberries for her guest. Her sweet, calm, matronly face, with a strange, half-sad, half-bright, but altogether lovely light shining upon it; her grave, thoughtful, but deeply *satisfied* expression; her very tone, as she read the last few lines, and all that Gerard Thurston knew about her, both from report and personal observation, told him that to her these truths were actual and vivid as the sunshine. It was not a mere ideal that she worshipped: a something very fair and pure, but shadowy and evanescent; it was a *life* that she had lived herself, that she was living still, that she would live for evermore; such love as she had read of, and spoken of, had united and did unite her yet to the husband whom God had taken early to his rest. Dimly, almost painfully, Gerard Thurston felt how great and how blessed such a love must be!—not a blind, romantic idolatry; not a wild passion to consume itself away by the very fierceness of its flame, burning to a white heat, and then sinking down into cold, grey ashes, with scarcely a spark, or a particle of warmth within

them, but a sacred, strong, inextinguishable love, kindled on the altar of a stedfast, self-sacrificing, God-fearing heart—a pure, and holy, and ever-ascending flame, not blown about hither and thither by gusts of passion and caprice, but rising always to the skies; never quenched by storms or rains, never changing in its warmth and quiet glow, but burning on, *on*—till the evening shadows fall, and then not dying out in gloom and darkness, but shining like a lustrous planet on the brow of night—purified, intensified, and glorified in the world above.

Surely next to God's great love must be that human, tender love, which is as perfect as aught can be on this side Paradise!

The evening wore on, and still Anne came not home; and still Gerard Thurston lingered in the pleasant parlour, where he had passed so many happy hours. Mrs. Musgrave went and came, for she was busy in her son's absence, and she never treated Mr. Thurston as a guest—it was, perhaps, his adoption as it were into the family circle, that made him love the Holt Farm so much better than the stately Holt itself. And yet a rising hope whispered to him, "I may, one day, love the Holt above all places under the sun; I shall love it when it is *her* home, *our* home! when I know that she will come to it."

Presently Mrs. Musgrave came again, and sat down near the open window, through which the sweet breezes were gently blowing, the pure mountain and sea air combined, laden, too, with the breath of flowers, and the fragrance of late hay—for in that northern land the harvests are oftentimes delayed. It was the very perfection of a balmy, exhilarating atmosphere.

"I told you," said Gerard, slowly, "that I had, till of late, known only weak and faithless women; you cannot think how such knowledge, such miserable experiences, lower the tone of a man's character."

"They should not do so; a man should act from principle; from a principle that is founded upon a rock, and than can never really be shaken by the unworthiness of others, though, through the weakness of the *human* element that is in it, it may apparently waver for a time—only for a time though; the Divine will always remains immovable, and so preserves the human with which it has entwined itself. Do you mind telling me if it were your mother and your sister who were not good, true women?"

"My mother, and *my wife!*"

"I had no idea you were ever married!"

"I wish I never had been. My own mother left my father when I was a little child; she left me, her only one, a babe in the cradle, and she dishonoured the name of Thurston. We never heard of her more till tidings came of her death. Years afterwards I met a girl whom I fancied was as pure and sweet and innocent as the wild, white roses in the hedge yonder; I loved her madly, passionately, as it was my nature to love in those days. I wooed her and won her; and for a little while I lived in a fool's paradise. *She was like my mother!* I cast her from me, and I hid my shame and my dishonour in far eastern lands. I lived a wild life for long; then news of her death came to me, and I was free. I scarcely believed then in an Almighty Father, but involuntarily I said, '*Thank God!*'"

"You did not seek a divorce from your wife?"

"No, we were abroad; we were married abroad, and there were circumstances which —— but why should I trouble you with the miserable tale? Enough to say that I did not seek release, as perhaps I ought to have done; and several years afterwards I heard that I was a widower. Death had effectually severed the tie which still bound me legally to a woman whom I could not but despise. Then, Mrs. Musgrave, I resolved never to marry again, never to seek the society of women, whom I had persuaded myself

were all the same, all like my mother and Clarice—either weak or vicious! But I have seen reason to alter my determination, and my dearest wish now is to bring home a mistress to the Holt. Mrs. Musgrave, I am sure you know who it is I wish to make my own dear wife?"

"Not Amy Temple?" said Mrs. Musgrave, a little mischievously.

"No, indeed. Miss Temple painfully reminds me of Clarice—the same delicate bloom, and small, perfect features; the same liquid, violet eyes, and rippling, golden hair. Ah, Mrs. Musgrave, it is your own Anne I want."

"Have you thought well upon the subject?"

"I have, indeed, and for a long time I hesitated, knowing how unworthy I was of so sweet and noble-minded a woman; fearing, too, lest I should not make her happy. I have a dark and violent temper, and my experience has made me suspicious. But I think if Anne would love me, all would be well. May I ask her, Mrs. Musgrave?"

"You may. I can trust implicitly to her decision, be it what it may."

"Then I will go over the moor, and meet her now. I will learn my fate at once."

CHAPTER XXIII.

A TALK ON THE MOORS.

THE sweet evening was still bright, and the waves all one dancing glitter, when Mr. Thurston swung to the garden gate behind him and bent his steps towards the beautiful wild moor, that was all one flush of imperial purple in the rich ruddy sunbeams slanting from the west. He looked back at the grey house he had left; part of it lay in shadow,

part was glowing in the lovely crimson light that was glorifying the heather and etherialising the mists upon the higher mountains, and turning the broad waters of the bay into the semblance of "a sea of glass mingled with fire"! He looked back upon the time-worn walls, mantled over with roses white and red, that bloomed half wild from the foundations to the very eaves, and even threw long clinging sprays across the high and lichened roof! It was a fair and goodly homestead, with every sign of excellent management, comfort, and prosperity about it; and now it was to Thurston the safe casket that usually enshrined the gem he would try to win and keep for his own wearing. There Anne had lived for almost twenty-three years; there she had grown up a happy, innocent young girl, still, as it were, a child in all the duplicities and wrong doing of the world, but in the best sense of the term a thorough noble-minded woman. Such a mother as Mrs. Musgrave could scarcely have had a daughter who would not be her pride and joy, and a blessing to him who should transplant so sweet and fragrant a flower to his own inclosures! Oh, if this love of his, which had grown so strong, should bring sorrow to the heart of the maiden and the matron who were so quietly happy now in the interchange of pure filial and maternal affection! If *he* should cast the shadow which had always hung about his own pathway upon the course of these two women, for whom he would have died right willingly, could such death have saved them from the pain of loss, or the anguish of despair? There had been a blight upon his life—would he not best have proved his love for Anne by never telling it, leaving her in her peaceful home till some better and happier man came to take her to his own fireside?

But all such thoughts passed away and seemed to melt into thin air, when he saw Anne coming towards him. Then he began to feel, as every man who is worth any-

thing must feel in such a situation, how much depended on the next half-hour, and to wish the avowal were over, or that he had deferred it a little longer, till his attentions had been more decidedly encouraged. But then Anne was not one to meet a lover half way—to her, no careful mother need address that most exquisite and tender counsel which Jean Ingelow gives us in one of her right noble poems:—

"My daughter, there is nothing held so dear
As love, if only it be hard to win;
The roses that in yonder hedge appear
Outdo our garden buds, which bloom within;
But since the hand may pluck them every day,
Unmarked they bud, bloom, droop, and drift away.

"My daughter, my beloved, be not you
Like those same roses!"

She came on now, with a smile on her face, a cordial, pleasant smile that might mean mere friendliness, and *only that.* Gerard's heart beat as it had not beaten for many a year, and with a pure, deep fervency it had never known till now. For if it were for Anne's happiness, he was content to give her up. It had been far otherwise in that earlier passion, which had ended so unfortunately: he had said then, "Give, or I die." Now he thought first of Anne, and of her well-being; now verily—

"Love took up the harp of Life, and smote on all the chords with might:
Smote the chord of Self, that, trembling, passed in music out of sight."

He would have passed from her presence, never to look upon her beloved face again in this weary world, if only he had been assured that to plight her maiden troth with him would be for her unhappiness. But for all that he loved strongly and passionately! the fires of youth had *not* gone out—they burned again into the steady flame of maturer years; in this new and later attachment was blended all the enthusiasm of youth, and all the strength

of manhood. That French moralist, La Bruyère, I think, who said, "Love is like the small-pox, the later you take it, the more dangerous it is!" uttered a veritable truism; though the remark can be true only of real love, never of its mere semblance, which is actually, when it comes to be dissected and analysed, as it will be some day, utter *selfishness!*

He drew her arm within his, and she seemed content that it should be so. She was the first to break the silence—"I am later than I meant to be; was mamma anxious, for I presume you have been to the Farm?"

"No! Mrs. Musgrave was not anxious; did you expect me, then, this evening?"

"James thought we should see you about tea-time—he is gone to St. Ulpha's, you know."

"I know. But, Anne, if you expected me, it was not quite kind of you to go away!"

"You come so often! Now that sounds inhospitable and uncourteous, and I do not mean it, for we are always glad to see you; I only meant that we count you now so much one of ourselves that we none of us think of observing any ceremony with you, such as staying at home on your account, and that kind of thing! And I had special business in Cockleham this evening—an appointment, in fact, that I felt I ought to keep. And '*oughts*' you know should be obeyed, and '*musts*' take precedence of '*mays*.'"

"With you I know they do; and henceforth, I trust, God helping me, it will be so with me. Mrs. Musgrave gave me leave to come and meet you, Anne. I told her I had something to say to you, and she wished me to say it. She knows what it is, for I told her plainly."

He felt Anne's hand tremble as it lay upon his arm, and when he took it in his other hand and held it firmly clasped, it was not withdrawn. He went on:—"I have been telling her something of my earlier life; I have

named a name to her to-night that has not passed my lips for years, or only in miserable soliloquy. Anne, you did not know that I once had a wife!"

"I did not know it, though in some way I think I divined it! Perhaps it was some word you let drop when you were delirious—I cannot tell. But, somehow, I felt certain you had been married—years and years ago."

"It was a good while ago; but I did not marry very young. I had not the excuse of youthful impulse, and consequent rash judgment. I was turned thirty when I wedded Clarice Craven; I was not thirty-six when we parted for ever."

"She is——dead?"

"She is dead, or I had not been here talking with you now! Anne, I do not ask you to take the place of that foolish, guilty woman. I want you to be to me what she never was, never could have been, even at the best, not alone my own precious wife, but my closest, truest *friend!* Only you ought to know, that in that old time, in that former experience, I was not a good husband. Let me tell you a little more than I have told Mrs. Musgrave. You know that I am the grandson of that unfortunate Raymond Thurston, from whom the Canonbury estates passed away. He went abroad and lived a strange, wild life—I mean a half savage, not a dissipated life. He married the daughter of an Englishman whom he met at Calcutta, and a most disastrous union it proved. They were separated long before death loosed them from the solemn vows that were between them. Raymond Thurston had only one son—my father, Everard Thurston—who accompanied his father in all his wanderings, and at last, when about thirty years of age, settled in the Southern States of America, and married a Louisiana belle, and an heiress to boot. This marriage was also a very wretched one; a more unsuitable couple were never

joined in holy matrimony. My father, as I remember my nurse saying—and she was a sensible, conscientious woman —was severe with my mother. The gloom of an exile was upon him; he was proud, grave, taciturn, and his heart yearned over the lost inheritance of his luckless ancestors. He had hoped that his wife's portion would go far to redeem the forfeited acres of his race and the stately Holt, of which we had a drawing, and of which old Raymond talked incessantly to his dying hour; but my mother's fortune was so tied upon her that it could not be appropriated by her husband. He might enjoy the interest, the principal he could not touch; besides, when it came to the point, it was far less than he had been led to expect—quite insufficient to buy back lost Canonbury Holt. My mother was a woman of a vindictive spirit, and she resented bitterly the coldness and sternness she encountered. I told you she had Southern blood in her veins; and she was of a passionate, impulsive nature. Well, after a time, when I was a little creature not a year old, she wickedly consoled herself—she left her home, and again was the proud name of Thurston shamefully dishonoured!

"My father brought me up to distrust and hate all womankind, and he also made me promise to strain every nerve to the accomplishment of the purpose in which he had failed. I was to vow to give myself no rest and no peace till I stood on the threshold of Canonbury Holt its lawful master! I had some money, though not much; and I took it and departed for Europe, and gave myself up to pursuits of commerce. I toiled day and night; I lived on the smallest sum that could sustain me in health and outward decency; but my life was sad, self-absorbed, and apart from business isolated from my fellows. At length came the riches for which I longed. I made what is called 'a lucky stroke,' and after this turning-point everything I touched prospered. I was at Geneva on business, I was

giving myself a few days' holiday—only a few, for my purpose was not yet accomplished, and I had resolved that I would not return to the halls of my fathers till I could do so an entirely unencumbered man, all just debts paid, every acre fully redeemed, and my coffers still in an overflowing state, so that I might live as a Thurston should at Canonbury Holt! I pass over this part of the story quickly, Anne. I saw at Geneva Clarice Craven, a governess in the family of an English nobleman! She was indescribably lovely, and very desolate, poor thing!—a genius, too, in her way, for she had a rare talent for poetic improvisation, and her singing and pianoforte playing were truly wonderful! Never since have I heard such brilliancy of tone, such perfect expression, such thorough execution. And her voice!—it might have made her fortune had she chosen to become professional. I thought I loved this beautiful, gifted girl, with the pure face of a child, and the graces of a woman.

"We were married; but the curse of my race seemed to be upon me. We had united ourselves too hastily; we did not understand each other; we had no affinities, and every year found us further and further apart. We had one child, a lovely boy, but he died, to my infinite sorrow, also, I must say, to the bitter grief of his mother, who seemed to cling more to her little son as she cooled towards her husband. I did not see it then, Anne, but I see it now,—I was terribly in fault in my behaviour to Clarice; she was but a child after all, and yet she had never known the joys of childhood. And when she faltered, I frowned and menaced, and when she erred I cast her off without appeal! I did *not* do my duty by her; perhaps, if I had, she might have been with me now at Canonbury Holt. And now knowing so much, are you not afraid to trust your happiness to a Thurston?"

"No," said Anne, in her peculiarly clear soft voice, "I am not afraid; I do not believe in these hereditary

curses. If we ask God to give us His blessing He will surely not withhold it."

"And it will be all so changed now! I shall work and try to accomplish the tasks that are committed to me. God being with me, I shall in some measure retrieve the wasted past. I begin to see, though dimly, why my life —the life that till lately I deemed so valueless—was given to me. Your few words of faith and hope have solved the dreary problem, Anne—all are created for God's glory, and they *must* glorify Him, either actively or passively, either in waiting or in serving, in suffering or in joy! And with you by my side all will be bright: you said yourself that my evening-time might be calm and full of sunshine; and you will make it so with your sweet presence, your wifely comfort and counsel, and with such love as I know you will give me, or else you had told me to go away at once. You will love as your mother has loved, Anne, or not at all!"

"I believe so, and I will try to make you happy; I will do my best to make amends for all you have suffered in past years. Only, Gerard, do not look for too much; do not trust to me too fully!"

"You will never disappoint me, Anne."

"I might, if you expected me to be always quite good and wise," said Anne, playfully; "but seriously I would say, do not anchor your best and loftiest happiness on me! Do not let your high resolves depend upon *a creature*, however dear! If it were God's will that we should be separated for ever on earth instead of united, we must still be content to do His work and wait upon His pleasure."

"I know it, Anne, but it would be very hard. I could not lose you now, my darling—do not speak of separation! But I tell you what, dear, we have nothing to wait for; your mother consents, and so does James, for I had spoken to him in confidence before; and instead of stay-

ing till the Holt is all that I could wish, you shall go there very quickly, and help me to make it worthy of its mistress. A few weeks will render it comfortable; alterations and improvements can come afterwards, and we can plan them together. I must go up to London soon, and then there is no reason why Dr. Redmayne should not at once do his part to make us happy! What do you say, Miss Musgrave?"

"I say nothing! I will not decide upon anything great or small till I have spoken with my mother. And remember one thing, if all this talk on the moors is to end in the Priory-church, I will have Lyulph there, when—when I make certain promises to his master."

And slowly the happy pair walked home through the deepening twilight. It was such an hour as comes but seldom to the children of a frail humanity, but once coming stands out for ever afterwards distinct from all other hours in life.

Bertie's sweet, tender memories were of the wide kitchen hearth, the crackling fire, and the hissing of the sputtering kettle! Anne's reminiscences would be of the shadowy, wavy moor, all one sea of purple heather; of the dark fells, rising solemnly against the evening sky; of a sunset of unimaginable glory, its dying splendour still resting on the jagged summits of the distant mountains; of a quivering line of pale golden light yet lingering on the sea; of the jubilant chant of the leaping waves away up the estuary; and of church bells ringing sweetly from the quiet town.

So varied is the colouring and so diverse the objects in the pictures we love best!—but in all, the hues are imperishable, and the framework is of gold!

CHAPTER XXIV.

CHALFONTS' OPINION.

How beautiful was the early autumn at quiet Chalfonts! How deep were the purple shadows on the moors and fells, and how glowing the rich sunlight that seemed to gather to its beneficent bosom the waving cornfields, the green meadow lands, and the grey old Priory-church itself. And the soft, blue sky seemed resting on the lonely mountain-tops, and the hoary cliffs rose altar-like upon the solemn mountain side, and the woodlands spread their leafy arms about the bases of the everlasting hills, and the lakes and streams shone like crystals in their emerald settings, and every evening the sun went down in royal pomp, bathing all the beauteous landscape in fairest hues of crimson and of gold, and leaving in the western heavens a radiance as of kingly banners floating on to victory. And already preparations were commencing at Canonbury Holt; the loud voices of workmen resounded through the desolate rooms and passages; orders were given daily, and progress inspected, and it seemed that before the winter set in the ancient halls of the Thurstons would be in readiness to receive their mistress.

But Anne had decided not to be married till the early spring; it was her mother's earnest wish that the engagement should not be too speedily concluded, for, as Mrs. Musgrave said, "It is so good a match, in a worldly point of view, Mr. Thurston, that I am afraid people may accuse us of hurrying on the marriage from merely interested motives."

So Mr. Thurston replied, "Never mind '*people*,' Mrs. Musgrave; besides, I do not at all look upon the match, if so it must be called, in a worldly point of view. All the gain is on my side clearly. I risk nothing, Anne

everything, and I think it very hard that I am to be obliged to wait till February or March because Mrs. Grundy will have it so."

"It is not exactly a case of 'Mrs. Grundy!'"

"It is because you are afraid that people may misconstrue your motives, and that is certainly being in bondage to the ubiquitous Mrs. Grundy. Once more, Mrs. Musgrave, have you really made up your mind not to give Anne into my keeping this year?"

"I really have! There are twenty reasons why I wish to keep my daughter with me a little longer."

"As if they could be reasonable reasons, when you are going to live at the Holt, and see Anne every day of your life! The only separation will be during our journey, and that will be really no more than if she had gone to pay a long visit at St. Ulpha's, or perhaps at Kensington. And the sooner that journey commences the sooner it will be over, and we three happily settled down at Canonbury Holt!"

"All the same, I cannot rescind my first resolve. Anne is yours, Gerard, absolutely yours; but I *must* have you wait awhile before you take possession. I know not how it is, but something tells me not to do this thing rashly; it is a sort of instinct that I cannot account for. It is a *conviction* that we are doing the right thing in postponing the marriage till next year, that makes me so uncompromising. And I really think such convictions are providential indications, and we ought not to ignore them."

"Don't think me very profane, but I do wish then that Providence had indicated a contrary course of action. Seriously, Mrs. Musgrave, do you stand in doubt of me?"

"Not at all! I believe in you without reserve, and so does James, my son. Nevertheless, it is well that you should know something more of each other, before the irrevocable step is taken. Consider, that this time

twelvemonths you did not know that such a person as Anne Musgrave was in existence!"

"I can hardly believe that our acquaintance dates back only till last November—a bare nine months! It seems to me as if I had known Anne always. I cannot understand how it was that my life ever progressed without my knowing her, without yielding to her influence, without referring to her in all my thoughts and actions! There are some people, Mrs. Musgrave, with whom you may spend a lifetime; your outward life and theirs may be ceaselessly and inextricably mingled, and yet you may never get at their inner selves, nor they at yours; the covers of the volume and the title-page may be before you morning, noon, and night, and yet the book itself be sealed, because it is written in an unknown tongue, or is, at the best, but inadequately translated; while there are others whom you know at once completely and for ever, to whom you feel yourself spiritually related, between whom and yourself there is an instant affinity, which is altogether indescribable. And, the moment I saw Anne, just within the threshold of that gloomy old hall of mine, I felt, as it were, that my soul flashed out to meet hers; she lifted up her calm, deep eyes to mine, and made me, although I knew it not then, all her own. From that hour I thought about her, and wished to seek her society; but something always told me that it would be for Anne's interest that I should let her alone. And for a long time I listened to the warning voice, and did not seek her, though my own wishes often impelled me so to do. And even now, I sometimes think, Mrs. Musgrave, that I have done wrong in linking her young, unclouded life with mine, that has been so stormy, so obscured, so lacking in the pure and gentle influences that have been hers ever since she can remember."

"I am not afraid. I can trust you; only you must wait awhile."

"From that sentence there is no appeal?"

"None! We Musgraves are apt to make up our minds, and abide by it."

"Then I shall go to London as I proposed. I had intended to put off that journey till I could take Anne with me."

Meanwhile news of the engagement had transpired, and Mrs. Redmayne called at the Farm, to be assured that the report was a veritable fact. When she got home she walked straight into the doctor's study, and throwing herself into a chair began to complain vehemently of the heat; she was evidently in anything but an amiable mood. The doctor wished she would take herself away, for he was deep in his next Sunday morning's sermon, and, somehow, sermon writing did not become easier to him as he grew older; and he was often seduced into giving his flock *réchauffés* of old discourses, and would have done so in the present instance, only that it was rather a special occasion—a charity sermon on behalf of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, the only society which Dr. Redmayne's high and dry Church principles allowed him to acknowledge; and, moreover, there had been a whisper from Mr. Littledale that his Grace might possibly arrive at Aldingham before the end of the week. Now, Dr. Redmayne was, of course, very anxious to preach one of his best sermons, for the Duke was rather critical in his tastes, and if he did not like the dish presented to him he was very apt to say so, to the infinite discomfiture and annoyance of his pastor. And whether it was that thirty years' excellent rations, choice wines, and luxurious repose had made him a little lazy, or that he had allowed his faculties to lie by till they had become somewhat rusty, certain it is that he encountered more difficulties than heretofore, when he attempted to give himself, *con amore*, to the task of composition. At the moment when he was invaded in his *sanctum* by the wife of his bosom, he was

bout the turn of a sentence, that do
led feeble and unrhythmical; and he
to request her to retire to her own
esy prevailed, and he permitted her to
, and complaining, while he pretended
his studies. Two or three hints Mrs.
hat she had something on her mind, and
ed not to understand; for he could not,
him, bring that refractory sentence into
ıe sat there cooling herself, and uttering
ıculations. At length, perceiving that the
vithin her, and that in the end she would
.er tongue, he thought it would be the best
ıe unruly member free and have it over. So
ı his pen, and pushing away his concordance,
"What is the matter with you, mamma?"
my dear, it is true! quite true! I asked the
tion, and was plainly answered in the affirmative.
" I was not mistaken."
.t is true? and in what were you not mistaken?"
.e doctor, a little savagely: she was putting all his
flight; and the splendid peroration with which he
l to conclude would be driven clear out of his
"I do wish, my dear, you would not take a pleasure
ıking enigmatically."
ım sure I speak as plainly as a woman can speak,
r!"
.hat is not saying much," he muttered; "women
ım do say anything to the purpose."
ɔ which ungallant speech Mrs. Redmayne made no
ınder. She knew perfectly well when to turn a deaf
:o her lord's comments, and when to listen deferentially.
as h[illegible] to take no heed, and his to hear and
inued mildly, "You must know, my
ınne Musgrave's engagement!"
! Oh, yes, to be sure it is true.

James Musgrave spoke of it himself to me, three days ago."

"And you never told me!" returned his wife, feeling rather vexed and angry. "Even this morning, at breakfast-time, I was wondering whether it was true, and a word from you would have set me right."

"I really did not know you wanted setting right. However, if you did, you are right enough, doubly so! I am glad that Anne is likely to make so excellent a marriage."

"Of course," said Mrs. Redmayne, shortly, and I am afraid that the words were hypocritical: a minute afterwards, while her husband was vainly wishing that she would go and scold the maids, or gossip with her daughters, she remarked, "and I feel sure that he fell in love with Anne Musgrave just because she was the only presentable girl who came in his way!"

"Perhaps so," returned the doctor, dreamily: he was thinking of his peroration.

"I am sure so," said Mrs. Redmayne, testily.

"Well, my dear! and what if it be so? We both know how good and sweet a girl Anne is; how right-minded, how sensible, how altogether charming! I am sure if I were a young man, and had never seen you, my dear, I should have been inclined to fall in love with her myself."

Mrs. Redmayne tossed her head, and fanned herself energetically.

"No doubt, my dear! Men, even the wisest of them, are such foolish creatures! If a middle-aged man loses the partner of his life, he is sure to replace her with a girl young enough to be his daughter."

"My dear, I said if I were a young man, which I am not, and can never be; I have had my day. You must allow that Anne is one of the best and sweetest girls."

"Oh! she is well enough, though not perhaps such a paragon as you and Mr. Thurston imagine her. But in

looks she is not to compare with our Clara; and as for cleverness, I am sure Jessie would put her to the blush any day."

"Jessie knows more Greek and Euclid, I daresay; but few men care to have their wives quoting Euripides, or poring over mathematics. For my own part, I prefer Clara's singing, and Anne's painting, to Jessie's Euclid. As for her Hebrew, I will not have it talked about."

"That is so like you, undervaluing the merits of your own children and exalting those of others. As I have said before, you do not deserve to have daughters."

"We have a great many things we do not deserve, my dear; but permit me to remark, that as yet I do not perceive the gist of your observations. What have Clara's beauty, which I assure you I quite apreciate, and Jessie's scholarship, of which perhaps I am not as proud as I ought to be, to do with Anne Musgrave, who is only very good-looking, and does not, I believe, know *Alpha* from *Omega*, and has not, as far as I know, passed the *pons asinorum?*"

"Oh, doctor! you are aggravating!"

"I do not mean to be so, my dear, though I feel a little aggravated myself at not being permitted to finish my sermon in peace, when I have reason to believe the Duke will be in his pew on Sunday."

"I say you are aggravating," persisted Mrs. Redmayne, ignoring the conclusion of her husband's speech; "if you had cultivated him as I wished, he would have been going in and out of our house, and would very likely have taken one of our girls."

"Flora! you know I will not listen to that kind of talk. I am not so anxious to be rid of my daughters, although you do not give me credit for being exemplary as a father, and I am not sure that I should have given either of my own bonnie lasses to the master of Canonbury Holt."

"It is all very well to say so now; but Mr. Thurston

is undeniably the best match in these parts—after his Grace. Of course the Duke comes first. And where there are good things going, my dear—and I must and will say it—I cannot see why we should not come in for our own share!"

"My dear, I am content to leave the fate of our daughters in wiser hands than mine or yours. But surely you forget that Mr. Thurston is suspected of having five-and-twenty wives somewhere; also of having compassed the death of the first Mrs. Thurston!"

"There really was a wife! he owns to being a widower."

"So I understand, but there is nothing criminal in that."

"Of course not; don't be foolish, doctor, I am not joking. All I mean to say is, that I think our girls ought to have had their chances. I hope I should never condescend to anything like manœuvring, but I do think Mr. Thurston ought to have been invited here; it would have been such a comfort to have Clara settled at the Holt—even in Levensdale Annie seems quite away from us."

The doctor's patience was fast being exhausted, and he replied with some asperity, "If Gerard Thurston had wanted my Clara he would not have had her with my consent! The Thurstons have never been happy in their marriages, and there is no reason to believe that the present master of the Holt will prove an exception to the rule. I believe there is some mystery about the first wife, or why did he allow so long a time to elapse before he owned to a previous union?"

"Mrs. Musgrave admitted that it had been an unfortunate marriage."

"Exactly! and if I were Mrs. Musgrave, I should think twice before I gave that good, nice Anne over to him. And now, my dear, if your only errand here is to lament the downfall of any absurd hopes you may have been en-

tertaining respecting the future of our girls, I really must request you to withdraw, or I shall have no sermon ready to preach before the Duke."

Like a wise woman, Mrs. Redmayne took the hint, and she muttered to herself, as she walked away, "Perhaps he is right! I daresay it's all for the best; all is not gold that glitters; and perhaps Anne Musgrave will live to mourn the day she first knew Gerard Thurston! I shall be sorry, though, if the match turns out badly, for Anne is a regular darling; she is not equal to our girls, but next to them. Yes! certainly next to them in every particular, and I am sure I wish her well with all my heart."

"So my master is going to be married," said Mrs. Twentyman to Mr. Crake, "and there will be a proper mistress at the Holt again."

"Yes!" returned Mrs. Crake, "and what do you think of it, Mrs. Twentyman; will it be for good, think ye?"

"I am sure I do not know why it should not," replied the housekeeper, drawing herself up. "My master is as true a gentleman as you will see if you go the world over, and Miss Musgrave is out-and-out a lady, and they love each other, and I expect they will be a very happy couple."

"I hope so too; but, Mrs. Twentyman, have you heard the Lady of the Mist has been seen wringing her hands and wailing, as hasn't happened these many years?"

"Who says so?"

"Many people! Rob Mickle and Stephen Warton saw her a week agone. It was early in the morning, about five o'clock, and they were going over-sands, following the out-going tide, when they saw her among the creeks, throwing up her arms and wailing like them weird birds wails up on the mosses, and they watched her make right for the shore and glide up the cliffs, and so towards the Chase. The old chapel was where she was going to, I daresay; and her coming bodes ill to the Thurstons."

"Are the cocklers sure they saw her?"

"Quite sure! and if they mistook, others didn't. Young Gibson, from Earnseat, who knew nothing about the Lady of the Mist, came in here the other morning as we sat at breakfast. Says he to my master, 'Crake! I think I saw a *wraith* last night!' 'And,' says Crake, 'what sort of wraith might it be, Master Gibson? for you see there's several sorts of bogies as haunts the marshes and the mosses, and specially the sands, where the quicksands be!' And, he says, says he, 'A tall woman, in a flowing, white dress that flew about very much, and she stood over by Stranger's Pool at sunset last night, and she seemed to be waving her veil or something she wore on her head, and she was chanting or singing something, and presently she glides right across the deep water and over the rocks, and up the Cockleham heights and towards two figures on the moorlands—a man and a woman, who were, to the best of my knowledge, Mr. Thurston and Miss Musgrave, for I met them before I went down upon the beach. And the white woman wailed pitifully; and if that was not a wraith, I shall never see one, Crake!' And Crake, he says, 'It wor a wraith, sure enough, and it's an unlucky thing to see her; but it bodes trouble to the chief of the Thurstons. The Lady of the Mist is the spirit of a certain Lady Amiel Thurston, who was turned out of Canonbury Holt at dead of night in the midst of a great snowstorm; it was her husband who turned her out to die upon the moors, because he believed her guilty of a great crime, of which she was afterwards proved to be innocent as the babe unborn. She went down upon the sands when the tide was coming in, and she was never seen again in the flesh; but she always comes back, throwing about her long, white arms, and lamenting whenever any evil is going to happen to the reigning Thurston.' And all that *we* knew before, of course, Mrs. Twentyman, and it's as true as if it was written in the Bible."

"And the Thurstons have never prospered in their marriages since that innocent lady was turned out into the pathless snow on that wild night to perish," said Mrs. Twentyman, in a low voice. "Either the husband or the wife has always been faithless, but I did hope my master's marriage with Miss Musgrave would put an end to it all. I thought the curse would scarcely stay upon the house when so sweet and good a young creature as she is was in it!"

"Mark my words!" whispered Mrs. Crake, "them two will never be man and wife! No, never! The Lady of the Mist did not follow them for nothing. And Crake, he says the same—he says something terrible is going to happen; and he knows a lot of things does my Crake, and he's seen many awsome sights in the Priory-church and in the old ruins yonder; but he don't talk about 'em much, for *sperrits* is vengeful like, and they does not like to be too much talked about! But that's neither here nor there, Mrs. Twentyman; only I say to you in confidence, that neither me nor Crake thinks the wedding will ever come off. And there's the missus at the Thurston Arms, she says the same, for her man met the Lady of the Mist the other evening—met her right up upon the Chase; she was not twenty yards off him, he says, 'and that's a token for trouble to the Squire,' says he, and he don't think it will ever be a wedding. And that's Chalfonts opinion, I can tell you, Mrs. Twentyman, and it's mine and Crake's and everybody's."

"And it's mine too!" said Mrs. Twentyman, still in a cautious whisper; "but for goodness sake, Mrs. Crake, don't ever go and say that I said so!"

"Trust me! I never do go tattling, it isn't my way; but, as I said before, it is Chalfonts' opinion!"

CHAPTER XXV.

MADAME GERARD IS SEA-SICK.

MR. THURSTON put off his London journey day after day, and it was the middle of August before he left Canonbury Holt. He had business, of course, with his lawyer in town; also, he had countless purchases to make, upholsterers to see, decorators to engage, and, finally, Kensington to visit, for he was charged with special messages to Bertie, and compliments to Mrs. Temple and Amy. It was with a strange and inexplicable pang that he bade adieu to Chalfonts; it was with a feeling deeper than regret that he saw fading away in the distance the ivied turret chimneys of the Farm; and he took himself to task for his foolishness, chiding himself and saying that it was altogether absurd in a man over forty to be as much in love as a boy of nineteen!

And yet, though the parting from Anne was really painful, it was not that which so entirely depressed him. Strive as he would, he could not banish a presentiment that never more would he and his betrothed meet in happiness and peace; never more walk those pleasant fields in sweet fellowship of spirit; never more watch the glory of the sunset, flushing and fading over mountain, stream, and sea; never more talk of the blessed time to come when one home should be theirs, one life-work, one hope, one joy of happy toil, and rest at eventide! And yet he had not heard Chalfonts say that Anne and he would never be man and wife. He had not been told of the reappearance of the Lady of the Mist; nothing rational or superstitious gave him this miserable sense of impending tribulation—he only knew that as in the warm sunny August day he drove to Keirmouth to meet the up train his heart was heavy within him, and he would fain have

turned back and relinquished this journey which seemed to commence thus ominously.

And yet it was but *seeming*, for nothing happened to delay him on the road; his two horses went on their way gallantly, neither of them stumbled, or cast a shoe; the sun shone gloriously, and the deep sea flashed its sapphire and emerald lights across the broad full-tide bay; the silver-winged birds swept across the golden-brown stretches of firm sand, and everywhere the flowers were blooming in their richest beauty. If he returned, Anne would be more annoyed than pleased; she was not an ordinary girl, caring chiefly for the power she could exercise; her love was something deeper and higher than that which demonstrates itself chiefly in errant, aimless talk, and interchange of caresses, and absorption in each other's society to the exclusion of all the rest of the wide world! She was not only the lady of his love, but his closet, truest *friend;* and as such, she was jealous of his honour, of his strength of purpose, of his manliness; she could not have borne that, even for her sake, Gerard should leave a duty unfulfilled, or shrink from a difficulty, or yield himself to a weakness irrational and vague. And this journey to London did seem, on many accounts, absolutely necessary.

Nevertheless, when he took his ticket at Keirmouth, he felt half inclined to go back in the carriage, but this inclination was so childish, so absurd, that he dismissed it almost as quickly as it arose, and still, as he walked the quiet platform—for, as I said before, Keirmouth was not the bustling junction it is now; as in those days there was no St. Ulpha's railway crossing the estuary, and skirting the wild shore—still, as he paced the narrow limits of the station, the only passenger for the south, he paused and leaned on the wooden railings of the station-master's garden, and looked across the little plot to the shining river Keir, that wound its way between him and his

Canaan. It was a tiny river, and tiny it still is, and ever will be, unless in this wonderful march of improvements there should ever come to be docks at Keirmouth; but it is as wicked a little river as ever ebbed and flowed, for where its muddy channel widens out into the bay it has quicksands innumerable, and quicksands guilty of the dealth of countless victims in the old time, when there was a regular traffic across the sands between Lunechester and St. Ulpha's.

But, smiling like a gleesome child, its small waves rose and fell now in the pleasant sunshine; it was spring-tide and its banks were overflowed, and it showed fairly in the landscape, while beyond it were the grey crags of Walton, rising steep above steep into the blue, unclouded sky, and then the silver cliffs of Argendale, and Earnseat Knot with its solemn pines and light, precipitous screes, and then lying dimly beyond the estuary, quite on the other side of the bay, the swelling heights that embosomed the lovely vale of Chalfonts, towards which he looked with all an exile's yearning, fond affection. But even as he gazed, and called himself a sentimental fool, the bell rang, the steam-whistle sounded, and the train came panting and puffing into the station, and in another minute he was rushing along the flowery levels and cuttings that intervene betwixt Keirmouth and Lunechester.

Arrived in London, he felt brisk enough, and he wrote immediately to Anne, without, of course, saying a word about the mood that had possessed him on the journey up to town. And the next day he went to his lawyer to talk about the settlements, that there might be no further postponement when the time fixed by Mrs. Musgrave should arrive. Mr. Mottram thought how much Canonbury Holt had improved his client, whom he had known hitherto as a gloomy, morose, saturnine man, whose business he was always glad speedily to conclude.

"You are intending to be married in February or

March next, Mr. Thurston?" said Mr. Mottram, when he had jotted down certain instructions.

"Yes; not later than the beginning of March, certainly; but I should not wish the settlements or the other business about the leases to be delayed till then."

"The matter of the leases can be completed at once, and the settlements shall be quite ready before Christmas; you need not fear any hindrance on our part, Mr. Thurston. I suppose you would not care to go over those papers of our Dresden friends, the Messieurs Schweiden?"

Gerard's face grew dark.

"No! I care nothing about them; there are some sums of money unaccounted for, I am aware; but let them go. If it were twenty times as much, I should not care about it."

"Still, Mr. Thurston, as you are beginning a new life, might it not be better just to go over the documents, and then let them be destroyed?"

"Let them be destroyed at once."

"Without going through them at all?"

"Yes; pitch them into the fire. If you will give me a light, and if you don't mind your grate being blackened, I will do it on the spot."

"Pardon me, Mr. Thurston, but that would not be wise. There may be, there *must* be, papers of importance in that box we received from Franz Schweiden; probably the certificate of the death and burial——of Mrs. ——"

"That would be of no value."

"It might be of value, Mr. Thurston."

"What do you mean?"

"It would be a terrible thing if you married Miss Musgrave, and then found that she had no legal right to bear your name!"

"Mottram! are you mad? You have been reading romances till your brain is touched."

"I never read romances furnished by the printing-press, Mr. Thurston; but, as confidential man of business to some of the oldest families in the country, I come across some terrible realities, that sound very much like romance, I can tell you. Of course I do not doubt that the unhappy lady we have mentioned really died and was buried; but if I were a widower, and were intending to contract a second marriage, I should certainly like to be furnished with undeniable proofs of the demise of any one who, if in existence, might put forth legal claims that would be inconvenient, not to say disastrous. Do not be vexed, Mr. Thurston; we lawyers are proverbially cautious and long-headed; it is part of our profession to be suspicious, and it is our duty to guard our clients against all possible surprises. If you will just bring yourself to say a few words, we will seek for and obtain the necessary certificate or certificates, if indeed they be not, as I daresay they are, in yonder case."

"Well, if you think it ought to be done, we will look through the contents of the case. If the certificates are there, they came unasked for; I never thought of requiring them."

It did not take long to turn over all that the box contained; but the only certificates that could be discovered were those of the marriage of Gerard Thurston and Clarice Craven, at Geneva, attested by several witnesses, and solemnised by a Protestant minister; also the certificate of the baptism of their only son, Gerard Raymond Thurston, a year afterwards. All the other documents were more or less of a private character, and Mr. Thurston, after a hasty glance, condemned them to the flames; they were placed in the fireless grate, Mr. Mottram applied a match, and they were quickly reduced to ashes.

"Now, will you just tell me, Mr. Thurston, where Mrs. Thurston died?"

"I really do not know."

"But from what place did you receive the tidings of her death?"

"From a small Italian town—Lecco; the letter was written by her special friend, Mademoiselle St. Benoit. It simply informed me that I was free—that Clarice had died, and that all expenses had been fully paid out of the funds placed to her account by Schweiden in the bank at Zurich. I wrote in reply, requesting to know whether there were unpaid debts, and whether the money at command had been ample for all expenses of illness and interment. Adele St. Benoit made answer promptly, though it was some time before letters were exchanged, because I was then in Palestine; she distinctly affirmed that nothing was owing; all who had ministered to Mrs. Thurston in her illness, and all who had been concerned in the funeral, were more than satisfied; and of course there would be no need to remit any more money to the bankers at Zurich. And so closed the most miserable chapters of my life, and I tried to forget that I had ever been a husband."

"Your lot was a most unhappy one, Mr. Thurston, and I can well believe that any reference to the past must be positively painful; only let me ask you one more question: you were quite sure—that Madame was unworthy of the name you gave her?"

"Quite sure! That is, I was perfectly satisfied in my own mind."

"I wish you had plucked up courage and obtained a divorce."

"I could not have my name tossed about in idle gossip; I was free from her presence, and that was enough. She left me as soon as ever I charged her with her guilt."

"Did she go alone?"

"Pardon me, Mr. Mottram!" and Gerard Thurston's brow wore its haughtiest and most repellent expression; "I do not choose to descend to those hateful particulars. I was deceived in Clarice; from the hour in which I ceased

to trust her, she virtually ceased to be my wife; she left me, and the separation was complete. I neither desired to hold her up to scorn, poor, foolish, deluded child! nor to publish to the world my own dishonour; it was the curse of the Thurstons which had come upon me, that was all; and I asked for no sympathy, no redress; I just accepted my lot, and bore my trouble in silence. When I knew that poor Clarice was dead I was glad that I had not proceeded to extremities; death had released me more effectually than all the divorce courts in Christendom could have done, and release final and entire was all I asked."

"I almost wonder that you dare to make another venture."

"You would cease to be surprised did you know Miss Musgrave. She is like the virtuous woman of whom King Lemuel speaks; her husband may safely trust in her, and she will do him good and not evil all the days of his life, and she will be to him a crown of honour. Miss Musgrave is a God-fearing woman, and, unlike poor Clarice, she has been brought up in a happy, blessed home, by a mother who has been herself the perfection of a wife. She has known only purity, and faith, and love; truth is to her as the very air she breathes. She is not a paragon of beauty, or cleverness, or fascination; she is simply the sweetest, purest, and most noble-minded girl I ever met, though she is not wanting in personal attractions, or in feminine graces and accomplishments."

"I can only say, Mr. Thurston, that with all my heart I congratulate you, and wish you all the happiness you can desire! I do believe that the hasty, inconclusive way in which most men pick up the women whom they take to wife is the source of much of the misery that so frequently ensues. With less consideration than they would give to the purchase of an estate, or an ordinary business transaction, they take a step which can never be retraced. How-

ever, at forty-three one may be presumed to have learned wisdom, and to have the common sense to look well before one leaps. Well, I will see about the certificates. *Lecco*, you say?"

"Yes, Lecco, on the Lago di Lecco, an arm of Lago di Como. But, now I think of it, the second letter which reached me when I was among the snows of Lebanon was dated from Sondrio, and it bore the Bergamo post-mark."

"That will be sufficient, however, to go upon; one of our clerks is just going to Austrian Italy for his summer-trip, and I shall give him an extra week and put the matter in his hands. He is just the fellow to ferret out all necessary information; but if you can remember any other names—for Mademoiselle St. Benoit was only a visitor at Lecco—it may simplify matters a little."

"I remember no names; I do not think any were mentioned. I have not preserved the letters, so I cannot refer to them."

"Mr. Thurston, such letters should always be preserved."

"I will be wiser in future, but this is really a matter of not the smallest consequence. I will wish you a good morning, Mr. Mottram; I have trespassed upon your valuable time quite too long. Next summer I hope you will bring Mrs. Mottram down to Canonbury Holt, and we will show you how fine English scenery can be!"

Meanwhile the Temples were coming home from Saumerel; they were returning only to plume their wings for another flight, for Mrs. Temple had resolved to spend the winter in the Pyrenees. They got back to Kensington late one sultry August evening, and one of the first things that Amy discovered was Mr. Thurston's note, saying that on a certain day, nearly a week distant, he would do himself the honour of paying a visit to Tylney House. Everybody was very tired, for they had crossed from Dieppe, and had been wofully sea-sick, and Mrs. Temple and Amy and Georgy were about equally miserable and cross.

Madame Gerard had really been very ill, but she had borne her sufferings bravely, though when the journey was accomplished and the quiet shelter of home once more secured she remained extremely indisposed, while the others were gradually recovering from the demon of nausea that had tormented them so relentlessly.

They had all finished supper when Bertie declared that she must go and see how it fared with Madame Gerard, who had been compelled to retire instead of joining the others at their repast. "I shall take her a little bit of chicken, and make her drink some cold brandy-and-water," said Bertie, energetically. She was feeling quite herself by this time, and away she went to execute her benevolent intentions.

She found Madame Gerard much exhausted, but certainly recovering tone; she was sitting at her dressing-table in her loose morning wrapper languidly putting up her long, fair hair for the night. Bertie quietly took the brush from Madame's hands, gave the smooth, silky locks a twist and a fold, and remarked that Madame's *coiffure de nuit* was complete, and now she must eat her supper, and then make haste to bed and rise in the morning like a lark, for there would be enough to do in preparing for the prolonged Continental sojourn, Mrs. Temple being in a desperate hurry to set off.

"It is a nuisance having to rush about so," said Bertie, while she watched Madame enjoying her chicken, and taking renovating little sips of the stimulant. "Still, travel is good for one, you know, and when I am once settled at Chalfonts I fancy my Continental journeys will be few and far between, if any. Everybody says you are apt to become a fixture after marriage."

"As a rule, yes," replied Madame; "the new life involves new duties, new responsibilities, which are incompatible with moving from place to place. You will make a devoted little wife, Bertie!"

"I mean to; James is such a darling; he deserves the best he can have. Won't I make him dumplings in spite of Amy! I shall consider the dumplings a sort of pledge of all other wifely duties. After all, Anne will be married before we are."

"Your cousin, Miss Musgrave?"

"Yes, she is going to marry Mr. Thurston of Canonbury Holt; you have heard me speak of him, I think; he was nearly drowned in Cockleham Bay, while we were at the Farm. I have only just heard of the engagement; I found a letter from Anne, she would tell me the news herself; she forbade James to mention it. Oh, Madame! what is the matter?"

Bertie might well ask, for Madame Gerard was pale to ghastliness, and the silver fork fell from her nerveless, quivering fingers; by a sudden dart Bertie saved the plate and its contents, or that too would have been upon the floor.

"Only a sudden faintness," gasped Madame Gerard, "the sickness has come back again; but tell me all about your cousin. So Gerard Thurston is going to be married?"

"How did you know his name was Gerard?"

"Did you not say so?"

"No, I think not," returned Bertie, puzzled; "but, Madame, I shall not tell you anything to-night, you look horribly ill; do take that brandy-and-water, and I will help you into bed. Mr. Thurston is coming here next week!"

The next morning Madame Gerard, looking in her extreme pallor like a waxen image, demanded leave of absence for a fortnight; she wished to visit an aged relative in Paris. Mrs. Temple pouted and demurred, for Madame had become essential to her comfort; but the governess persisted, and declared that she would sooner relinquish her situation than fail to pass the proposed

visit. Of course the stronger mind triumphed over the weaker, and Madame had her way; in three days she was to set out for Paris.

CHAPTER XXVI.

AN OLD POSSESSION.

GERARD THURSTON concluded his business much more quickly than he had anticipated, and early in September he was ready to return home. Ah, how sweet a haven of rest and joy Canonbury Holt seemed to him now! how, as the time waned, and task after task was accomplished, and this transaction completed, and that affair put in progress, his heart beat with pleasure to think he might now count the days which must elapse before Anne and he could meet again! The dark cloud of presentiment which had hung over him on leaving the north had melted away during his busy sojourn in the great city; the future had seemed so assured, so bright, so completely satisfying, while he had been choosing furniture for the rooms that he intended specially for the use of his bride; and after the lapse of years it pleased him to mingle with his compeers, to take his place among the men of his day, and to enter into the schemes and questions which were agitating the public mind in that year of our Lord 1850.

So occupied was he with present cares and the rush of society, that he scarcely thought at all about the dark mood which had possessed him as he bade farewell to Chalfonts; his letters to Anne were bright and hopeful, but replete with a deep though only half-expressed tenderness, and instinct with the high and noble thoughts that her words had first awakened in his breast. And now

he had only to see one or two persons, to give some final orders to tradesmen, and to call upon the Temples according to promise. The servant had told him, when he called first at Tylney House, that the family would be home on the Friday; it was then Wednesday, and he had gone to his hotel and scribbled a few lines to Miss Temple to the effect that he would have the honour, &c., of seeing them that day week. On Tuesday morning Madame Gerard would take the tidal train to Folkestone.

But it so happened that on the Monday afternoon Mr. Thurston found that all his business in town was accomplished, and he saw no reason why he should any longer defer his return. If he went to Tylney House that evening he could start next morning for the north, and reach Canonbury Holt before dark, and he would see Anne three days earlier than he or she had anticipated. Therefore he hastily arranged his matters, and, calling for a "Bradshaw," decided at once upon the hour of his departure. Then he jumped into a cab, and was driven off to Kensington, where, however, he met with a temporary rebuff, for the servant who answered the door told him that Mrs. Temple and the young ladies were from home; there was no one in the house but the governess and Miss Juliet, except, of course, the servants.

"Had not the family returned from Normandy, then?" asked Gerard.

"Oh, yes!" was the ready reply; "but they were leaving again almost immediately for the south of France, and to-day they were doing a great deal of shopping."

"At what time do you expect them home?" inquired Mr. Thurston.

"In about an hour," returned the servant; "in less time, indeed, for dinner is ordered punctually for seven, and now it is past six; will you walk in and wait, sir?"

For the man knew who Thurston was, and he thought that his favourite young mistress, Miss Bertie, would be

sadly disappointed if she missed seeing this gentleman, who came from Chalfonts, and perhaps brought some greeting or pretty present from Mr. Musgrave.

"If you would like, sir, to sit in the drawing-room—or perhaps the library would suit you best; there are the day's papers and magazines about—I will show you there?" continued the servant, interrogatively, while the visitor stood looking doubtfully, and consulting his watch. Now Mr. Thurston very much wished to see Bertie and Amy; they were Anne's own cousins, and everything and everybody that belonged in the remotest degree to Anne began to be invested with a certain interest and importance of its own; besides, James would be pleased to hear how Bertie was looking, and Bertie would certainly be glad to have the latest accounts of her lover. So, after a moment's irresolution, he replied that he would wait, and that he would prefer waiting in the library, whither Mr. Biggs, the factotum of the Temple household, immediately marshalled him.

The library was a large and rather gloomy room. It was well furnished with dark oaken shelves; an ancient Turkey carpet covered the middle of the floor, and dusky, crimson curtains shadowed the only window, which looked upon a small lawn, bordered by evergreens, and ornamented by a mossy, dilapidated sun-dial. It might have been cheerful enough in the morning, when the bright beams looked in through wreaths of ivy and festoons of Virginian creepers, which sadly needed pruning; but now the room, with its east aspect, was already shrouded in a sort of uncertain twilight, for the sun was just sinking beneath the horizon, and it was a grey and cloudy evening—one of those evenings when a spirit of quiet sorrow seems to be brooding over the weary earth, as if it were tired of the long day's toil and suffering, and were sinking down to listless languor rather than to peaceful and restoring rest. Everybody knows what such evenings are—sunless,

breathless, colourless; the rusty leaves scarcely trembling on the trees, the hot haze mingling with the smoke as it fails to rise into a higher atmosphere, the din and bustle of the dusty streets, or the monotonous silence of the fields; and every one knows how depressing is the influence exerted on all human beings who have nerves and sensitive organisations.

I do not think Gerard Thurston could exactly be called "nervous," nor was he, in spite of his gloomy mood three weeks before, given to fancies; but although he had been buoyantly happy all day, although another evening would see him in the home he was beginning to love so well, although he had driven along Piccadilly and Knightsbridge, painting to himself Anne's joyful surprise at his unlooked-for appearance, and almost going over in anticipation the welcome he knew awaited him at the Farm, he no sooner sat down in that dusky, dreary library, than he felt as if the bright anticipations of the day had been a mere mirage—as if a boundless, untraversable sea lay between him and Chalfonts; as if the grey, sad evening were a type of the life that must henceforth be his own.

"I am as ridiculous in going home as I was in coming hither," he said to himself, almost savage. "There is something electrical in this sort of atmosphere, I suppose, and it affects nervous people, though I never knew that I was nervous before. I daresay that illness shook me a good deal, and perhaps I am scarcely strong yet. Well, if I am never quite myself again, I shall not regret those weeks at the Farm; if I had lost all the vigour of health, I should still have been the gainer—ah, how much the gainer—in every point of view! If it were decreed this night that Anne and I must meet no more, I should still have to thank God for the sweet love, and the true, firm friendship there is and ever must be between us two. But this time to-morrow evening the hills will be rising round me, the free air of my own north country will be blowing

freshly across the level mosses, and I shall hear again the deep sound of the channel tide; and before I sleep I shall see my Anne, and there will, I trust, be no more need of partings; for, when all is said and done, partings are dismal eras in one's life."

On a small table, rather in the shadow of the heavy curtains, lay the magazines of which Biggs had spoken—the month's *Blackwood* and *Fraser*, *All the Year Round*, and the current number of *David Copperfield*. Also, there lay among these a small curiously-bound foreign-looking volume, which seemed strangely familiar to Thurston's eyes. He took it up. Surely, unless he greatly erred, that book had once been his! He had bought it at a certain shop in the *Haupstrasse*, at Leipsic; he knew the peculiar pattern of the heavily-embossed cover; it seemed to him like the face of an old friend, long unseen and temporarily forgotten, but warmly welcomed still. He opened the volume, and all doubts, if he had any, were dispelled: on the margin of some of the pages were pencil marks of his own; in one place a foot-note in German, which he well remembered adding in the days that were past. He rubbed his eyes, and felt like one in a dream. However could this book have come into the library of Tynley House? for that Amy and Bertie had not, by any accident, brought it with them from Chalfonts he was quite certain, since it had not been in his possession for many years! He did not remember to have seen it since he and Clarice parted; and it had always been his impression that she had taken it with her to Switzerland, whither she proceeded after leaving him at Munich.

He turned to the fly-leaf, and there in small, delicate German characters, the sight of which made his heart stand still, as under the influence of a sudden, sick terror, appeared the name of *Clarice Gerard!* He knew the handwriting well: *who was this Clarice Gerard?*

He sat for a moment almost too bewildered to think;

then a quick resolution to seize upon the mystery, and go into its very depths at once, possessed him. He rang the bell, and desired Biggs, who answered it, to say that he wished to speak to the governess, if she were in the house.

"Yes, sir; certainly, sir. Madame Gerard is upstairs. Your name is Mr. Thurston, I think?"

"I shall be obliged to you if you will not mention my name. Say that a gentleman has called on business, and in Mrs. Temple's absence would be glad to speak to her; he does not wish to wait."

There was a feverish impatience in Thurston's tone that rather surprised the man; but he was too thorough a servant to betray his own feelings; he only bowed, and said, "I will ask Madame Gerard to come to you immediately, sir."

CHAPTER XXVII.

HUSBAND AND WIFE.

A FEW minutes passed away, and Gerard's excitement became uncontrollable. Now he paced the darkening room; now he halted before one of the heavy bookcases, and seemed to be intent on deciphering the titles of the volumes it contained; now he took up again the little book that had been the cause of all this sudden terror and sick falterings of heart, and again he strained his eyes over those two fatal words, "*Clarice Gerard!*" And yet it was not the mere words that moved him so strangely; there might be more than one Clarice in the world, and Gerard was not a very uncommon name in France. At any rate it was *not* "Clarice Thurston!" and yet it was indubitably the handwriting of her who, when living, had borne that appel-

lation. Had it been Thurston instead of Gerard, he would have been less excited; for it might have been that Clarice had written her name in the book long ago, and that it had somehow passed into the possession of Madame Gerard, Mrs. Temple's governess. Would she never come? It seemed hours since Biggs had walked away to summon her; would she divine who it was that wanted her, and would she refuse to appear? She must know of his relations with the Temples, she must have heard of him so often from Amy and Bertie, and news of his intended marriage must have reached her ears! *His marriage!* Oh, if that which he feared were true, there would be no marriage for him! Anne could not be *his* Anne! they must be parted for evermore. And he groaned aloud as he thought of all that was involved in the coming interview. Oh, would she never come! he could not bear it much longer, the suspense would drive him mad; should he ring the bell, and inquire of Biggs why the governess delayed. Surely, if she had declined to appear the man would have returned to tell him so! In despair he threw himself back in the large leathern chair by the table where the magazines were lying; he was thus in the deep shadow of the curtains, and no one entering the room would immediately perceive him.

At last the handle of the door was turned, and some one came in softly—some one rather small of stature, very slender, and wearing a dark dress that trailed upon the ground. All the light there was fell full upon her face, for she stopped nearly opposite the window, not far from it, and not far from Thurston, and he could see distinctly the delicate, worn face, the exquisite but sharpened features, the pale, sunken cheeks, and the soft, fair hair, simply braided back from the brows and knotted up behind. Yes, it was Clarice! though not the wife he had parted from more than seven years before. Not the brilliant-spirited young creature, flinging back with scorn

his just reproaches, glorying in her shame, as he assured himself; not the haughty little beauty, smiling defiance at his anger, with the bloom upon her cheeks, and the light of smothered passion in her eyes, and with her long, bright hair waving and curling like the tendrils of a vine!—but a woman faded and sad, very grave, very quiet, and perfectly self-possessed; a woman over whom had passed all the waves and storms of heaviest grief; a woman who might, indeed, have been dead and buried once, and come back to another life than that which had been so sorrowful a burden at its close, so grey and cold in its beginning, yet so radiant, so warm, so marvellously sweet, for a little while!

It was a minute or more before she saw that any one was in the room; she began to think that Biggs must have blundered, as the best of servants sometimes will; when she perceived the outline of Thurston's figure in the chair that had once been Mr. Temple's. A moment of displeasure; who was this gentleman who did not rise to meet a lady? Then a sudden thrill, a wild beating of the heart, a spasm of terror, a sense of helplessness! Was not this the man from whom she was ready to fly to-morrow morning! Gerard saw the change come over her pale, composed face; he saw the slender figure droop, and the small hand convulsively clutch the table-cloth, as if seeking some support, and he knew that he was recognised.

He rose now and stood before her, and she never moved, only stared stonily at the tall, dark figure she remembered, oh, so well! A spell, a sudden enchantment seemed laid upon her; not for worlds could she have spoken, or turned away her gaze from that familiar form; not for worlds could she turn and go away according to her first instinct, away out of the room, out of the house, out of the country, out of the world itself if that were possible! But at last he spoke, and there was neither

anger nor pity in his voice, neither love nor hate, neither marvel nor upbraiding—only a dull, monotonous despair.

"*Clarice!*" he said, drearily.

But she could not answer; her lips trembled and essayed to pronounce his name, and it was in vain; not a sound could she utter; she could only stand, clinging to the table, and feeling as if all things earthly had abruptly come to a conclusion. And again she heard him say, "*Clarice!*" Then the bonds were loosed, and she could speak.

"Yes, it is I—Clarice!" she replied slowly. "Oh, why did you come here?"

"Rather, why should I not come here? Why have you done this? What does it mean? Why have you so wickedly deceived me?"

"Was it wicked?" she asked dreamily, and more, as it seemed, of herself than of him.

"Was it wicked?" he repeated, wrathfully. "Is deceit no wickedness, treachery no crime, the most utter falsehood no disgrace? How dared you play this cruel game with me? You—*you* who had already darkened all my life? *You*, who dishonoured the noble name I gave you? *You*, who shattered my faith in God and in my fellow-creatures? *You*, who made me for long years an exile, an outcast, a miserable man?"

"It was because I felt that I had by my pride and folly darkened your life, that I wished to set you free. I was very near death, and I recovered; came back to life to find it insupportable. Then the thought occurred to me, why should it be known that I was still in the land of the living? Why not seem to die to the world, as I had indeed died to you? Why not set you free from your hated, galling yoke? Why, I thought, should his life be desolate, because I, a thousand miles away from him, yet breathe and bear his name? We were never to meet again; you said so, and I had accepted my sentence. I

had been so near the grave; even when they told me I should not die, my tenure of life seemed so frail, so utterly precarious! Why not, I thought, let him believe that he is free? Adele St. Benoit agreed with me, and she told me not to concern myself any more about it; we were in a lonely spot near Sondrio, and we were going away as soon as I had strength to travel. Why not leave Clarice Thurston behind me—let her cease to exist? Why not, since life must be prolonged, begin afresh, and leave you also to commence anew?"

"It was like a false woman. Do you know in what position you have placed me? Do you know what might have been? Oh, my God! how I might have wronged that pure angel! She might have been now my—no! not my wife; she could never have been *that* while you lived, unless——"

"I was wrong! I saw that I was wrong long ago; and yet, if I were quite dead to you, what matter? I have no claim on you; I have long since ceased to bear your name. I only asked to be allowed to earn my own living in peace and quietness. I will never, never obtrude myself upon you. Let us part, and no one need be the wiser; I shall never speak of to-night's meeting, never let any one know that I am not, as I am believed to be, a widow! Nay, in all but the legal fact, I am indeed a widow! I have accepted the position; let me retain it."

"It is not your position I am thinking of. You are free to go where you please, to do what you please. I am thinking of *her!* Oh, Clarice, you have done me a bitter wrong."

"Forgive me! I never thought of this—or, if I did, it did not seem so terrible. You and I were as utterly severed as if there had never been any union; death could not, I thought, have parted us more effectually. And now, an accident makes all this difference! If you had only waited till to-morrow evening, I should have been far

away—you would never have known; you might still have been happy."

"No," said Thurston, sternly; "it must have come out sooner or later. These 'pious frauds,' as some people call them, never answer. You have plunged us in misery unspeakable; but it would have been worse still had the secret transpired a twelvemonth hence. It would have killed her——"

"Miss Musgrave, you mean?"

"Hush! I will not have you breathe her name. Had you no pity—did you mean to let me walk blindfold into the snare you had laid for me, and then to come forward and proclaim what you had done?"

"Gerard, have mercy! I would rather have died than that we should meet again, either now or at any time. When they said I died at Lecco, I did, as I believed, die to you and to the whole world as I had known it in my former estate. I was so altered that there was little chance, I thought, of being recognised. Besides, I kept clear of all the places where we had been together; and, more than that, in my new and lowly position there was little chance of my meeting any of those persons who had known me as Clarice Thurston. It was partly pride, I own; but it was chiefly for your sake, chiefly that you might be free to form other ties: perhaps, I fancied, you might think of me with less bitterness—thinking of me in the grave."

"I shall think of you with tenfold bitterness when I think of *her*—of all that she must suffer. I feel that I hate you, and loathe you far, far more than on that day, that memorable day, at Munich! Then, you had only wronged *me!* now, the wrong touches another—aye, a whole family, who but for me would have never known this shame, this sorrow. Go!—or rather, I will go—your presence tortures me. Tell what story you please to the Temples, I shall not contradict it; and yet, it is not fitting that you should be here, the guide and companion of these pure,

innocent girls. A woman who does what you have done loses her place for ever in respectable society; even if she do reform, the consequences of her old sin return upon her again and again; she is ever on the brink of a discovery."

"What have I done, Mr. Thurston?" said Clarice, quietly.

"It is needless that I tell you," he replied indignantly; "what is the use of going over the old ground again? You know why you left me!"

"I do! but you do not know, Gerard! I told you once that I had been foolish, but not guilty. Guilty of folly I was, guilty of vanity, and an infatuated pride; but not guilty as you deemed me. You would not believe me, you told me that I lied. But here, to-night, when Providence has brought us together in spite of ourselves, and before we part for ever in this world, I trust—I declare to you, as in God's presence, that I was never what you believed me to be, what you called me in your wrath and disdain, when you bade me leave you, and see your face no more! I was ever your true wife."

"You will excuse me if I cannot receive what you are saying. And now, let this conversation terminate; nothing is to be gained by prolonging such an interview. Twice have you fallen like a blight upon my path; you cannot wonder that your presence is most distasteful, most intolerable!"

And he turned to go; but even as he spoke, Clarice, whose strength had been slowly failing her, sank at his feet, whether in humiliation or in utter weakness he could not tell. He raised her, and was about to place her in the easy chair, and leave the room, telling Mr. Biggs that Madame was indisposed, when the door opened, a flood of light poured in from the hall, and a whole party entered.

"I thought you said Mr. Thurston and Madame Gerard

were here, Biggs?" cried Bertie, feeling her way along the table. "Why, it is quite dark; bring the lamp. Mr. Thurston is gone, I suppose."

"He is probably in the drawing-room," said Amy; "I saw that the gas was lighted, as we drove up. Madame and Juliet are entertaining him."

"I am here, Miss Temple," said Thurston, speaking out of the darkness. "Pray tell the servant to bring a light. Madame Gerard is ill."

A light very quickly came; and there lay the governess, not quite insensible evidently, but white as death, and looking like one struck down by some sudden and heavy blow. And there stood Thurston nearly as pale as she, with horror and suffering written on every feature. It seemed as if years had gone over his head since he entered that fatal library. Both Amy and Bertie thought how old, how haggard he appeared; and then his voice—hollow, broken, harsh. Even Mrs. Temple knew at once that something dreadful had occurred, and she looked suspiciously at the quivering eyelids and the marble features of the unfortunate Clarice. A horrible suspicion of the truth, or something very near it, began to dawn on Bertie's mind. She never knew how it was, but a sudden and unaccountable intuition enabled her to understand pretty nearly the situation of Madame and Gerard Thurston. She remembered suddenly many things: how Madame had seemed painfully interested in her account of Canonbury Holt; how, with changing countenance, she had listened eagerly to the story of Gerard's escape from drowning in Cockleham Bay; and, above all, how great had been her emotion when, on the Friday night previous, she had told her of Anne's engagement. What these two before her were to each other she scarcely knew; but that they had met before, that they had once been familiarly associated, she felt confident.

"What is this all about?" asked Mrs. Temple, help-

lessly; "those two white faces" and Bertie's grave, perplexed looks rather frightened her. An instinct of something wrong possessed her, and she began to feel sadly nervous.

"Send those children away," said Thurston, in a low tone, pointing to Georgy and Hilda, who had come in with the rest. And the children were sent away accordingly, though they went reluctantly enough, and strongly prejudiced against Thurston for treating them as children.

"Of course he is an old lover of Madame," said Georgy, as she walked sulkily up stairs.

"Or else he murdered her husband," was Hilda's fierce rejoinder. She was so angry with her visitor, that she could have credited him with the commission of any sort of crime.

"Now, what is it?" asked Bertie impatiently, when the door closed upon her sisters; "do you not see you are making mamma ill? Madame! if you can speak, say what it is."

But Madame answered never a word; she only grew whiter, if that were possible, and clasped her trembling hands. Thurston looked irresolute.

"The truth is best," he said, at length; "all this misery has come through falsehood. Besides, I owe it to you, Mrs. Temple, to be frank. Clarice! the truth must be told."

She bowed her head. At that moment it mattered nothing to her what was said about her. Yes, it was best that the truth should be told; they must know now who she was, that she was a kind of impostor; and she had just begun to care for them. But it did not matter; in any case she must go away now; she would probably be dismissed at once.

"Your governess and I are not strangers," said Thurston, quickly, to Mrs. Temple. "I believed that she was

dead—dead some years ago. I proceeded on that belief, and I came here to-night to pay my compliments to those whom I thought would soon be my own connections by marriage. Amy, I thought you would be my cousin! Bertie, I supposed I should have to call you sister-in-law as well as cousin."

"Good gracious!" interposed Amy; "and so we shall be related when you and Anne are married; I never thought of that!"

"That is all over!" He could not proceed.

"I understand," said Bertie; "Madame Gerard has some claim upon you!"

"The closest claim; she was *my wife!*"

Amy started, and Mrs. Temple shrieked in dismay.

"You wicked, wicked man!" she said, "and you were going to marry my poor niece Anne, knowing at the same time that she could never be your lawful wife!"

"Nay, madam! I believed firmly that she whom I had called wife was dead! In Madame Gerard, as I heard of her at the Holt Farm, I could scarcely recognise Mrs. Thurston. Till within the last hour I dreamt of no barrier between myself and Anne Musgrave."

"Then it is you who are wicked!" said Mrs. Temple, turning round upon Clarice, who seemed to be slowly recovering her senses. "What a bad, deceitful woman you must be to come here as a widow!—to tell such falsehoods, to impose upon my dear husband, and to try to contaminate my fatherless girls; *you!* a runaway wife! To think I should have had such a character under my roof all these months!—to think I should have talked with you confidentially!—to think I should have been on the verge of taking you with me to the Pyrenees! Oh, dear! what will the world come to? I think it grows worse and worse every year! Mr. Thurston, what are you going to do with your wife? She cannot stay here, you know!"

"Of course not! I will provide for her. She had an

ample allowance till she chose to report herself dead. She may have half my property if she will, so that I see her face no more; she might have it all, so that I were free to take Anne for my own, and work for her like a common labourer. But that is vain talk—that can never be! Even if at this distance of time I could obtain the divorce I ought to have applied for at the time, I could not ask a girl like Anne to take a name that had been tossed about in courts and flourished in newspapers, that had furnished jests for all the ribald throng, to whom such scandals are as daily food!"

At this point, Clarice slowly rose, and glided from the room. Her step was so feeble, her movements so tottering and uncertain, that Bertie followed her and helped her to her chamber, very much to Amy's surprise and virtuous indignation.

"You are very good—very kind, dear," said Clarice, when she and Bertie were alone; "but you must not stay with me; your mamma would not like it."

"Oh, Clarice! is it true?"

"It is true that I am Gerard Thurston's wife; it is true that I deceived him, and caused some one to write and say that I was dead. I did it out of love for him, and out of pride, because he charged me falsely, and then would not hear my vindication. But, Bertie, the charge *was* false; if it were my dying hour I would solemnly affirm it! I was a poor, foolish girl, badly brought up, ill trained in every way, imprudent and vain; and I involved myself in a complication of difficulties; I laid myself open to misconstruction, to slander; I knew my own purity and defied the world, reckless of appearances. Oh, Bertie! a woman can never do that, and keep her name unsullied. But God knows I was innocent! It was not principle that kept me straight, for in those days I had none; it was my love for my husband, for I did love him; I have always loved him—always shall, and I had

not a thought that was disloyalty to him! But why do I say all this? How can I expect that you will believe me, when *he* refuses to give credence to my words?"

"I do believe you, dear; poor, poor Clarice! It was very wrong of you to say you were dead; but, under the circumstances, I might have done the same. Only my poor Anne—my sweet, darling Anne! How will she bear it? Oh, Clarice! it never answers doing evil that good may come!"

"Never! never! I felt that long ago; but it was too late to go back. It seemed so easy—so expedient when first I thought about it; so I tried to blot out the name of Clarice Thurston from the land of the living, and Adele helped me. Adele thought it was noble of me—self-sacrificing!"

"And so it was in one sense; it must have been a sort of death to give up the husband you loved, for ever! Lie down, dear; you are trembling like an aspen-leaf."

"I must go away! You heard what Mrs. Temple said?"

"Mamma will not say the same to-morrow. Of course, I see that you cannot go on living here; but to-night, at least, you shall not stir. Close that trunk, and go to bed. I am going to get you a composing draught, or we shall have you in a fever by the morning."

"I wish I could die! I wish God would take my useless life away!" wailed Clarice, as, quite exhausted, she gave herself up into Bertie's kindly hands."

"Hush!" said Bertie, gently, "you must not say that. You did not seek this encounter! Depend upon it, it has come to pass for some good end. Only trust in God, and walk as He shall direct you, and all will yet be well. Poor Clarice! it is very hard; but you must be patient and strong!"

"He will hate me so intensely now! He has been lonely so long; and now I have come to dash to the

ground all his hopes. Oh, Bertie! if I might die, then he would be really free; no one need know that I was not Madame Gerard, the French governess, and he might marry Miss Musgrave at the appointed time."

"Our lives are in God's hands, dear; leave it all to Him."

When Bertie went down, Gerard Thurston was gone. He had had some private conversation with Mrs. Temple, and he would see her again in the morning; then he would immediately set out for Chalfonts. Bertie longed to accompany him, that she might comfort Anne; and yet it seemed more of a duty to stay and tend the hapless Clarice; for Anne would have her mother, who was parent and elder sister all in one, and her brother, and Gerard himself; while Clarice was quite alone in the world, and with all the anguish of reproach to bear. For though, as Bertie firmly believed, she did not actually deserve her fate, she had certainly done much to bring upon herself the misery and disgrace she suffered.

"To think she has been six months in this house!—a woman who ought to be divorced!" said Mrs. Temple.

"I am not quite clear about that, mamma," returned Bertie, stoutly; "but she was wrong to give herself out for dead; crooked ways never prosper."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

BACK TO CHALFONTS.

MR. THURSTON did not see his wife again; but he left an envelope for her, containing a fifty-pound bank-note, and he begged Mrs. Temple not to be harsh with her, and not to publish her unhappy story; when she had chosen

her future home she was to communicate with Mr. Mottram, and through him receive such an income as should be ample for a single woman not mixing with society. She was free to reside where she would, either abroad or in England, and he urgently desired that the name she had herself adopted should be retained. As Madame Gerard she was always to be known.

From Tylney House Gerard Thurston went to Mr. Mottram's offices, and with him he took counsel, and made all necessary arrangements; there was no need now for the clerk to prosecute his inquiries at Lecco, or elsewhere; he might take his holiday without troubling himself to hunt for the grave of Mrs. Thurston. There was no longer any question of marriage settlements; the master of Canonbury Holt felt as if the web of his life, which had promised so fairly, and which had seemed at last as if about to be wrought into an excellent and gracious pattern, had been suddenly broken off, shattered in warp and woof, and left a tangled mass of feeble threads, never again to be reduced to any harmony or order! Mr. Mottram could only deeply sympathise, and promise to arrange about Madame Gerard's income, and indeed to act between her and his client whenever any point of reference on either side arose. And then he hurried away to his hotel, paid his bill, and was quickly in a cab, tearing over the stones to catch the 3 p.m. express from Euston Square.

He just caught it, and, slipping a handsome gratuity into the guard's hand, he secured a compartment to himself. It would have been intolerable to travel down in company with man or woman, for till the present moment all had been hurry, bewilderment, and confusion; but now he must think—think of what he left behind him, but chiefly of the other end of the journey. Hateful, hateful London! would that he had never set his foot in it! And yet, he could not but tell himself, as the whirl of

thought grew calmer, that it was really better so! The shock must have come, sooner or later; such things are always ultimately revealed: had he missed Clarice now, and all unwittingly married Anne, it would have been like living, without any knowledge of the fact, on a treacherous volcano; the change none the less, that it was not dreaded; the desolation, when it came, only the more complete, in that it had been entirely unforeseen! Bitter as was his agony now, it would have been still more bitter had Clarice appeared when Anne had been for years, as he supposed, his wife; when children of hers had called him father, when he had proved to the full her sweetness and goodness, and found in her the sum of earthly happiness! It was a heavy burden now that he must bear; it would have been far heavier if the blow had touched *her* fair name, as well as all her future peace of mind; if her marriage had turned out to be a mere farce, an idle ceremony, because of the terrible unknown *impediment!*

And so, lost in sad reflection, the bright autumn afternoon faded into evening, and the shadows fell, and the stars, one by one, gleamed out; and presently, looking forth from the carriage window, Thurston saw that the quiet landscape was steeped in mellow moonlight, and afar off, as it were, he felt the breath of the everlasting hills.

And this was coming home! This was returning to the scenes and to the friends he had learned to love so well! And he had pictured to himself so often that journey northwards; the rushing of the train past the golden harvest fields and the woodlands of the midland counties; the flitting past the tall chimneys and the grim, gaunt mills of Southern Luneshire, and then the rising of the shadowy fells on the distant blue horizon; then the low murmur of the waves, and the fresh sea breezes, and the purple moors; and, last of all, the grand old pile of Chal-

fonts Priory-church, and the Chase in all its glory, and then, love, home, and joy!

And now all was so changed, so exactly the reverse of all that he had fancied, when over and over again, in the roar and bustle of the mighty city, he had gone through the journey in fond anticipation. There were the fields of ripened grain, and the standing sheaves, and the woodlands putting on their gorgeous autumn hues; and there came the stretches of cool sand, and the low chiming of the waves, and the swelling moorlands, and the distant mountains keeping solemn watch, as it were, over all the land. Sea and shore, and hill and valley, were the same as when he saw them last—only he was changed! Only on him had fallen the darkness of a great despair. Truly is "the setting of a great hope like the setting of the sun." And in that hour of sorrow and pain unspeakable, Gerard Thurston felt that so it was; and not yet had the stars of faith and hope shone out from behind the heavy tempest-laden clouds; not yet was the "night holy!"

When the train stopped at Lunechester it was already past ten o'clock, and he began to reflect that it would be impossible for him to reach Canonbury Holt before the morning; for Keirmouth, where he must leave the rail, would be fast asleep, and so far from obtaining any kind of conveyance at that hour, it would be difficult to find any kind of lodging. So he concluded to rest for a few hours under the shadow of John of Gaunt's "embattled pile," and he was not long in finding an hotel close to the station, where, for the name of the thing, he ordered supper, and allowed the obsequious waiters to serve him exactly as they liked. Presently he lay down, to toss about, as he supposed, till the time came for him to rise and take the earliest train stopping at Keirmouth. But nature was worn out, and refused to keep watch any longer, and no sooner was his aching head laid on the cool, white pillows than sleep profound and dreamless

visited him; so he did not awake till some one, tapping at his door, informed him that it was six o'clock, and that his coffee would be ready in a quarter of an hour.

The morning was bright and cool, and the grey mountain-tops, clearing themselves from the uprising mists, gave token of a brilliant day. It was still low tide, and when he came to Keirmouth he determined to go "oversands" to Chalfonts, though at another time he might have hesitated, the transit being always, except at very lowest water, to say the least of it, hazardous. He found, however, a driver and guide, who agreed to take him across the channel, and, with all the old recklessness of past days, he rather enjoyed seeing the carriage sunk deep in the water when they passed the ford.

"If he were drowned," he said to himself, "what then? It were all the better, surely; it had been better indeed if Lyulph and James Musgrave had not saved his life six months ago, in that very bay of Cockleham that was shining now before his eyes!" But then came better thoughts —this was the old frenzy, the old rebellion against God's will! Since those days he had professed another faith, if indeed it could be said that he had had any faith at all before he came to Chalfonts. And this was the trial of his new-born faith, this its fiery ordeal—would it stand the test? Would it, taking deeper root, flourish and bring forth in season the blessed fruits of patience and good works? or would it droop and die out because the precious seed had been sown on the unyielding rock, where there was no depth of soil, so that the first keen blasts of winter or the first scorching rays of noon might easily wither it, leaving the hard stone as barren as before?

But no adventure befel Gerard Thurston that morning as he crossed the estuary; his guide knew the quicksands, and steered clear of them, and though he got a very thorough wetting, that was all the mischief that befel

him; and ere long he found himself high, if not dry, on the heights above the fishing huts of Cockleham. Another quarter of an hour, and he was at home. Mrs. Twentyman was surprised to see the master so soon; but she was very glad, for the place had seemed so dreary, she declared, ever since he went away; and Swingleswairy had moped, and Lyulph had pined and gone backwards and forwards between the Holt and the Farm, alternating in his affections; and two nights before he had gone down to Mrs. Musgrave's, and laid himself upon the doorstep, and howled at the moon, till everybody had felt queer, and Judy had prognosticated awful tidings coming by the morrow's post, and even Miss Musgrave had got nervous, and tried to soothe the dog, who, contrary to his wont, would not be comforted by her, but, having howled to the extent of his desires, set off again to Canonbury Holt, where he arrived two hours after midnight, to repeat the performance which had caused them so much disquietude at the Farm.

"But you are come back again, sir, all right, and so you see it meant nothing," concluded the housekeeper. "And now, sir, let me get you some breakfast; I am sure you want it, coming over 't sands from Keirmouth. Why didn't you go round by Farleton? It is not so much farther, if you keep the rail, and it's safer a score of times. I hate those sands, sir; and I should have thought you had had about enough of them."

"There was no danger this morning, Mrs. Twentyman; and I am beginning to know the shore and the channel now. Besides, I had a guide, and if there had been danger——"

"If there had been danger, sir, I humbly hope you would not have gone into it! Remember, sir, you are all one as a married man now, and ought not to risk your life. But bless me, dear heart, sir! how bad you do look! Have you had any illness since you went away?"

"Not any illness; but I have not been quite well lately."

"Ah! London air doesn't suit you, sir; it doesn't suit many a one. It's London that has done all the mischief," said Mrs. Twentyman, triumphantly. In her ideas, London was merely a den of thieves, a field of temptation, a hot-bed of vice and dissipation, and the home of cholera and all other terrible diseases.

"Yes; I think London has done the mischief," he said, sadly.

There was something in the tone that went to Mrs. Twentyman's heart—a quiet dejection, that told her, as she said afterwards, that "the master had tasted trouble since he went into the South."

"Well, sir," she answered, cheerily, "we must try and set you up again. The sea-air and the fell-breezes will soon make you all right. But the first thing is your breakfast, and the next is to go to bed; for you look that fagged and tired that I should think you have not had a good night's rest this long while. Your room is quite ready, and I'll have some coffee directly, and there's some grouse that can be devilled in no time. Better lie down, sir, till I send the tray in." And the good woman began shaking up the sofa-pillows, and making all kinds of little arrangements for her master's comfort. Somehow, Mrs. Twentyman had come to love him with a right motherly love, not only because he was a Thurston—a family to whom her family had long ago sworn allegiance—but for his own sake, for he had been so bright and pleasant, and so considerate, since his long sojourn at the Farm; and it pleased her greatly that he should marry and settle down, and take his proper place among the county families. And that he should marry Anne Musgrave, the flower of all the Fellshire maidens, was the crowning point of her satisfaction.

But Thurston would not lie down; he looked restless

and excited, and there was a fever-spot on his paled, bronzed cheek that the good woman did not like to see.

"It's all right at the Farm," she said presently, hoping to cheer him up, as she turned to leave the room. "I saw Mrs. and Miss Musgrave last night, and they were both quite well; and Miss Anne, if you will excuse me saying so, sir, blooming like a rose. And, says Mrs. Musgrave, 'You expect the master home on Thursday, Mrs. Twenty-man?' and I replied that I did; for of course I looked for you, according to your own letter. I did not anticipate this unexpected pleasure, neither did Miss Musgrave then, I think."

"No; I had finished my business, and I returned at once. It was scarcely worth while to write again—indeed, I should have arrived as early, if not earlier than my letter."

"Only, I am afraid Miss Musgrave will be sorry that she consented to join this party."

"What party? Is she not at home?"

"No, sir; she is gone with the Miss Redmaynes, and some visitors of theirs, and some other people, to Bekanks Abbey. I took the liberty, sir, of sending a hamper from the Holt; I thought you would have wished it. There are about twenty people, sir, altogether, besides the servants. They were to set out at nine o'clock. They have been gone almost an hour, I should say; it's nearly ten now."

"How would they go?"

"By carriage and by boat, sir."

"By boat?"

"By boat to St. Ulpha's, Mr. Thurston; and then they would take hired vehicles. It is a pleasant ride to Bekanks Valley. The abbey is only about five miles or so from St. Ulpha's. The tide just served nicely—though, indeed, unless it is quite at neap, one may almost always get up the St. Ulpha's estuary. You have to steer out to sea a

little to get from one channel to another though, if the water is low. But here I stand talking and gossiping, and you wanting your breakfast!"

While Mrs. Twentyman spoke, a sudden desire seized upon Thurston to go to this picnic, to see Anne once more, before the shadow of their common grief should fall upon her. To wait at home all day, to see the preparations going on, to hear Mrs. Twentyman's chatter, to look out across the Chase to the grey chimneys of the Farm, where Anne was not—it would be intolerable! He did not stop to consider whether it would be ill or well that he should; he only knew that it would be the last day that he might ever spend in Anne Musgrave's company, and it never struck him how impossible it would be for him to join this party, and see Anne, and talk with her, and yet appear as if nothing had transpired. Neither did he think how strange it would seem, when afterwards it came to be known that he and Anne were parted. He made a hurried meal, chiefly to satisfy the housekeeper; then his favourite horse, Sultan, was brought round, and away like the wind he went across the country, after the picnic party. Lyulph was already in advance; he had constituted himself Anne's body-guard for the day.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE ABBEY RUINS.

When Gerard reached the ruins, he heard the sound of laughter, and the ring of merry voices, and he felt half inclined to go back again; for the first time he realised the difficulty of the task he had taken upon himself. How could he mingle with this light-hearted group? how meet

Anne's happy smile? how listen to her gentle words of greeting, and not betray the terrible secret that he was holding back for a few hours only? He paused upon the green, before the abbey, debating within himself whether he should retreat, while yet unobserved, or whether he should go forward, and join the happy circle who seemed near at hand.

The question was settled for him; while he yet mused and wavered, Clara Redmayne came suddenly upon him from the north transept, and recognised him in a moment. "Is it possible?" she cried, "and Anne has not an idea of your being home again! She expected you on Thursday evening, for she told me so!"

"Yes, but my business was concluded, and I was glad to leave London."

"And glad to set your face towards our bonnie Fellshire again?" said Clara, meaningly.

"Yes, I am glad to be at home," he replied wearily; though, as he spoke, a spasm shot through his heart. "Glad" indeed? no, never, never more! never glad again! Content and peace might come back in God's good time; but *gladness*, never; that was all over for his life! "And we are glad to welcome you home," said Clara, cordially putting out her hand. "But I ought not to be keeping you here, and your own liege lady all unwitting of your approach. Only,—excuse me, Mr. Thurston, are you quite well?"

She might well ask, for the emotion that Anne's name, and the knowledge of Anne's immediate vicinage, drew forth, was blanching his dark face, and saddening his brow very visibly. So might he have looked, when they brought him first to the Holt Farm, just rescued from the grave! "I have not been quite well!" he replied, wishing heartily that he had stayed quietly at Canonbury Holt, "but——"

He was interrupted by Lyulph, who came dashing

through the eastern window and across the grey, ancient tombs in most irreverent fashion. All the great hound's dignity was forgotten; he crouched, he gambolled, he whined, he barked; finally, he lay down in excess of happiness at his master's feet; then looking up into the familiar face, he saw something there he had never seen before, and he lifted up his own grand head, put his cold nose consolingly into Gerard's palm, and gazed sadly and solemnly into the deep, dark eyes that were looking down on his. And then Anne, hearing the well-known bay, and being always afraid of mischief when Lyulph wandered from her side, came forth herself from the northern portal, and at one joyous glance saw the reason of the dog's unwonted demonstrations. Lyulph sprang back to her, and back again to Gerard, as if he wished her to share his happiness; and Anne expected that Gerard would hasten to her side; and he came, but slowly and steadily, and without any of the *empressement* that had already distinguished him as a lover. Anne started as he came nearer, for the thirty-six hours' anguish had done its work, and the face he brought back with him to Bekanks Abbey was not the face he had taken away with him from Chalfonts, scarcely three weeks before. The face she had kissed at parting was bright with love and hope, and the blessed promise of a happy future very near at hand; the face she gazed upon now was worn and haggard, and marked with lines of pain. The love, the great deep love was there still; but the hope and the brightness had faded out, as completely as if it had never been.

Anne looked round. Clara had discreetly vanished; for she was beginning to "understand this kind of thing;" she and Mr. Harry Littledale having just concluded to take each other for better and for worse, if only the doctor would be good enough to grant consent. And Harry Littledale was of that day's party, and how he came to be separated from the lady of his love, even for those few

minutes, is more than I can explain; for he had been her shadow since the first setting out from Chalfonts Rectory. Only Lyulph sat between the pair, with his large, liquid, human-looking eyes, gazing up into theirs, as if he would mutely question them of the trouble he saw impending.

"What is it, Gerard?" asked Anne, softly, when they were left alone.

"What is what, dear?" he asked, trying to speak gaily. "Where are the rest of the people?"

"Why are you looking so sad, so ill?" she inquired, ignoring his question altogether. "Oh, Gerard dear! do not have any secrets with me! Whatever it is, dear, I can bear it, if I may only bear it with you." For answer, Anne found herself clasped in Gerard's arms with a fierce energy that almost frightened her; and all that he could say was, "My darling! my darling! why did I ever leave you?"

"Tell me what has happened, Gerard. Your trouble is my trouble, you know."

But he only groaned aloud, and kissed her with a wild passion that made her retreat, and look round apprehensively, lest there should be any witnesses of this strange scene. Another minute, and others of the party came in sight, and then Gerard, with a mighty effort, composed himself, and met Jessie, and Mrs. Musgrave, and the Grangeside curate, and Mr. Harry Littledale, and spoke calmly, and returned their greetings with all proper show of courtesy. And presently the whole group had gathered about him, and he did not try to escape or repulse them, for just then he could not bear to be left alone with Anne. And then it was time to think about the dinner, and he was called to help with the lobster salad, and some one gave him a game pie to carve, and he became seemingly absorbed in the pleasure and humour of the hour; and he replied to the sallies of Jessie's curate, and poured out the champagne, and looked extremely horrified when the

salad oil was found to have amalgamated with an apricot tart. But there was a hollowness in Thurston's laugh that day, a sadness in his smile, and a wildness in his tone, that were noted by several present; he could incase himself in the armour of his own reserve and hauteur, and defy the world's sharp peering curiosity; but he was a bad dissembler, and he could not appear gay and unrestrained while his heart was bursting with grief, and while his soul was seethed in very bitterness, and not betray himself. Everybody who had any perceptions whatever, knew that the master of Canonbury Holt had brought back with him from London a great and heavy trouble; and the shrewdest among them guessed that it related to Anne Musgrave.

More than once, when he said some witty thing, and all around him laughed, he saw Anne looking at him with mingled sadness and surprise; *she* knew that the mirth was not genuine; she saw the struggle that was unseen by all the rest, and it was all that she could do to screen herself to bear patiently with the frivolity of the hour, and wait till such time as explanation should be possible.

The time came sooner than she had expected, for dinner being over, most of the party strolled away in twos and threes, and one group of six set out with the avowed intention of walking to Gleaston Castle, a feudal ruin, scarcely three miles distant from those of the venerable abbey. But no one thought of including in his or her party either Mr. Thurston or Miss Musgrave; and the consequence was, that at last the two were left alone upon the greensward, with the grey walls overshadowing them and no human being in sight, for in those days, before there was any St. Ulpha's railroad, Bekanks Abbey was only occasionally the resort of tourists and excursionists.

"Now I must know what all this means," said Anne, taking Gerard's cold hands within her own. "Dear, you

are so cold, and it is a very hot day, quite sultry; oh, Gerard, tell me what has happened!"

"How foolish it was of me to come here! I might have known that my face would tell tales!"

"I do not quite understand."

"I did not want to unsettle you here, Anne, with any recital of my troubles. I thought I would leave it all till to-morrow, and have one more day—not of happiness, but of—one more day of pleasant intercourse with you, my love."

"*One* more day, Gerard? you mean then that something has happened that will separate us? but say *our* trouble, please, for your sorrow must be mine."

Meanwhile they had strolled into the Chapter-house, and there on fallen blocks of stone they sat down, and Gerard told his tale. Then they both were silent, while around them gathered the shadows of the autumn day, and not a sound fell upon the unnatural stillness that brooded over the lone valley. Anne was the first to speak:—"Gerard, it is God's will; we must bear it; we have done nothing wrong; this sorrow came to us, and it seems to me that it was a special Providence that led you to the discovery of the truth, and being a truth it was well that it should be discovered!"

"I suppose it was! but oh, Anne, do not speak so calmly, I feel sometimes that I *cannot* bear it; I cannot be patient, I cannot be brave—a cruel fate pursues me!"

"Ah, no dear, not *fate*. It is Providence."

"A frowning Providence, surely?"

"Just now it is, but there may be a smiling face beyond."

"Anne, I cannot stay here at Chalfonts! I shall go abroad again; I shall resume the old life, and become a wanderer once more. The bright vision of a happy home on my own soil, that came to me for awhile, has vanished quite away. The Holt will be hateful to me now."

"All that can be decided presently. I am not sure that you ought to desert your duties, Gerard. Are you quite certain that Clarice was—that she deserved at your hands the treatment she received?"

"I have never doubted it, though she says herself she is innocent of doing me so great a wrong! But, Anne, a woman who sinks as she sank will tell any lie; when a woman has once lost self-respect she loses, rapidly, all principle, all sense of right and wrong. But you know nothing of such things, Anne; you, with your pure, innocent life, cannot fancy what such women are!"

Anne shuddered, and a pink hue stole over her white cheeks. "But yet she separates us!" she said, sadly.

"Yes; separates us as entirely as if she were the best and noblest of her sex. Anne, what is to be done?"

"It is impossible to say yet. I think you ought not to desert your post, there is so much you have undertaken."

"All that must go. All my interest in my work is over. I would have tried to do my part in the world, to do it worthily, to do it cheerfully; but I looked forward to having you by my side; that is all over, and——"

"And you must still work on. Oh, Gerard! it is very hard, but we must not, if we can help it, falter. Our lives were given us for work—for the work that God would have us do; and we must do it in His way, not in ours."

"I cannot be as philosophical as you are, Anne; I cannot take patiently the destruction of all my hopes,—nay, and I will not!"

"Hush, dear, hush. It is not philosophy; it is just yielding to God's will. But do not think it is easy, do not think I suffer less than you." And Anne could say no more, for the tears came thick and fast, and would not be restrained; she had struggled bravely, she had striven to help Gerard, but her little strength was exhausted, and she could only long to be at home, that she might lie down in solitude and darkness, and bemoan her misery.

They wandered away into the woods, when they heard voices approaching, and it was time to be leaving the ruins when they once more joined the party. Not only was it getting dusk, but a storm was gathering, and in the hurry no one noticed Anne's pale cheeks and swollen eyes. At St. Ulpha's they found the boats ready, and Gerard and Anne went in one of them. Dreary looked the sea that night, for the sun had set behind a bank of heavy clouds, and dreary looked the coast and the hills beyond, and mists were gathering round the mountains. To Anne and Gerard it seemed like a vision of their future life, for though each was now striving for the other's sake to be calm and outwardly cheerful, the hearts of both were torn with anguish and oppressed with care. Their sorrow was too new to be borne quite patiently as yet.

Presently a peal of thunder broke over the waste of moaning, darkening waters, and soon the lightning flashed vividly, and some in the boat hid their faces and shrank with terror. But Gerard and Anne sat quietly listening to the mighty voice, and watching the fiery levin as it fell from the black cloud and smote the waves about their little bark. They were certainly in some danger; but the storm passed, and they landed safely on the rocks at Cockleham, and the moon was shining in all her brilliance. "So will all clouds and tempests pass," said Anne, as they ascended the hill. "He who holds the winds and waters in His hand, guides also all the circumstances of our lot. Let us be patient, Gerard."

CHAPTER XXX.

DARK DAYS.

THOSE parting words of Anne rang in Gerard's ears all night; but it is far easier to say, "Let us be patient," than in patience to possess our souls week after week, month after month, perhaps year after year, nor even in the far dim perspective of a dreary future, behold any rift in the clouds that seem ordained to overshadow our path till it shall end upon the grave's dark brink. It is far easier, too, to be patient under the first wild anguish of a mighty sorrow, than to bear on bravely and meekly when the trouble has come to be so old that even dearest friends have almost forgotten it. One does not realise at first all that is included in the new-born grief; one does not know how great the void will be, how intense the aching pain, how weary the long waiting for a brighter day. It is only as time passes away, as events resume their ordinary routine, as the world settles down into its wonted channels, that one begins to know how much is really lost, how heavy is the burden that we have to bear!

"The past rolls forward on the sun,
And makes all night. Oh, dreams begun,
Not to be ended! Ended bliss,
And life that will not end in this!
My days go on, my days go on.

"I knock, and cry, Undone, undone!
Is there no help, no comfort—none?
No gleaning in the wide wheat-plains,
Where others drive their loaded wains?
My vacant days go on, go on."

And something of this experience began to fall upon both Anne and Gerard before long. All Chalfonts knew that the engagement between them was dissolved, and various reports were industriously circulated; some of them being pretty near approaches to the truth. But

nothing that the world could say troubled either of the people so bitterly concerned. What did Anne care if all the matrons and spinsters in the place should sit in judgment on her case, and declare her guilty of being a jilted woman? What was it to Thurston if once more the popular voice was lifted up against him, and the old scandals were again repeated with a hundred new ingenious variations? Each one was content to let "people" chatter as they would. To vex themselves about mere aimless talk and petty gossip was to fret about the bandages that covered an incurable and agonising wound! It was as if Hercules should quarrel with the fringes of Dejanira's tunic while the poison of the vestment itself was eating away his flesh and bone! Still, Anne thought it best that some people should know how things really were; and Dr. Redmayne and Dr. Wilson were told the truth, or rather the outlines of the truth, and they repressed scandal wherever it arose, parried side thrusts and plain inquiries, and simply remarking that the affair was most painful, most unfortunate, but that neither Miss Musgrave nor Mr. Thurston were blameworthy, and that they deserved the sincerest sympathy of all their friends, succeeded in making some gossips ashamed of the eager haste with which they had all but condemned the guiltless and the sufferers.

Anne had not seen Gerard since their parting on the evening of the day of his return; but James had been up to the Holt, at first with some intentions of upbraiding its unhappy master for not having been surer of his premises before he involved another in the misery of his lot; and he had been quite prepared to speak severely on the cruelty of which Thurston had been guilty in associating Anne's fate with his own while yet he was uncertain whether or not previous claims and barriers existed. But when he came to hear the whole story exactly as it stood, he could not speak one word of reprimand. His friend

had been cruelly deceived, and all the wrath and just indignation he had been nursing up, as the champion of his sister's ruined happiness, fell on the head of the unhappy Clarice, who long ago had wrecked her husband's peace and honour, and now, by her unparalleled falsity and treachery, had involved him in a life-long misery, and it was concluded that Thurston and Musgrave should remain friends whatever might betide.

It seemed to Chalfonts that Gerard and Anne simply fell back into their old places. Gerard remained at the Holt, though every week he told himself that he would go far away, where the purple moors and the shadowy mountain tops, and the shining water of the bay, with all their sweet and sorrowful associations, should vex his soul no more! But week after week passed on, and still he and Lyulph kept their solitary state in the quiet mansion, and every Sunday saw him in his pew at the Priory-church, and most of the week days saw him down upon the salt marshes or the mosses, superintending the works there, which now were beginning to progress vigorously, or talking to the Cockleham fishermen, sometimes hearing of Anne and her visits to their wives and children, and listening sadly and silently to her praises.

And Anne! how did she fare? For, surely, on her would fall the greater share of suffering. She had to endure the sick weariness of repression, which in all heart troubles is woman's peculiar inheritance! Woman, if she be true to her best instincts, must bear so much and say so little! if she makes a moan at all, it must be in solitude and silence; and very often she has to bury her dead loves and hopes out of sight and trample down the turf upon their graves, and come away and leave them without any visible memorial stone.

There had been a few days at the first when Anne had poured forth hourly all her griefs, all her bitter disappointments, into that safe repository of all her secrets, her

mother's gentle, sympathising bosom. And she had been really ill, unable from physical suffering to leave her room; though gifted with the most excellent of constitutions, nature had succumbed beneath the shock, and the fearful tension of that day at Bekanks Abbey.

And Mrs. Musgrave and James were almost if not quite glad that it should be so: agonising headaches, followed by extreme exhaustion and occasional fainting fits, furnished abundant reasons why, for some weeks at least, she should admit neither friend nor acquaintance, nor be seen in any of her customary haunts. The quiet, the absolute quiet enjoined by Dr. Wilson, the nursing, the long rest did her good; they probably saved her from something worse than intermittent neuralgic headaches. And when early in November she came downstairs again to that room, where she had been so happy, where she had talked to Gerard, and prophesied for him a calm and happy future, she felt that a new life lay before her, that the past must be put away, though it gave her many a thrill of anguish only to think of it; that she must not nourish her unhappiness, nor neglect her work in life, nor become indifferent to the joys and troubles of others, with whom she had always sympathised. And once again she said to herself, as "with emptied aims and treasure lost" she sat alone in the fading twilight of the November afternoon: "There is still left God's presence in the soul, and the hope of the world to come!" How well she remembered saying that to Gerard in the spring, not the autumn twilight, some months before! Now, indeed, the rose leaves had faded, and the thorny stem alone remained to wound her if she clasped it closely, only for a moment! Now the bright draught was dashed from her lips—now, her Future indeed would not "copy fair her Past on any leaf but Heaven's!" But she strove, and not vainly, for that comfort which resting quietly in God's hands will always give. She learned to submit, not because her lot was

inevitable, but because her Father in Heaven had chosen for her the paths of loneliness and pain; because *He* saw fit to visit her with a heavy and continuous discipline. And though the old girlish brightness might be gone for ever, still there was within her heart a fount of peace, and calm, abiding happiness; and she, too, could say:

> "Be fully done,
> Supernal Will! I would not fain be one
> Who satisfying thirst and breaking fast,
> Upon the fulness of the heart at last
> Says no grace after meat. My wine has run
> Indeed out of my cup, and there is none
> To gather up the bread of my repast—
> Scattered and trampled; yet I find some good
> In earth's green herbs, and streams that bubble up
> Clear from the darkling ground,—content until
> I sit with angels before better food:
> Dear Christ! when Thy new vintage fills my cup,
> This hand shall shake no more, nor that wine spill!"

Then, for her mother's sake, Anne felt that she must be cheerful—and oh! for *Gerard's*. She had said so much to him once about the duty and the joy of yielding one's own will to the Lord's. If she failed now and sat down alone in her despair, refusing to be comforted, might he not believe that her faith—*all* faith—was but a beautiful ideal—fair enough to contemplate, but impossible to realise? Might she not by the manifestation of an irrepressible rebellion and discontent, hinder him in his struggles after a holy resignation? Might she not, though for ever separated from him, help him by bearing her share of the trial bravely and serenely?

And as the year died out, and the January snows fell softly on the lonely moorlands about Canonbury Holt, the strength she had besought was given to her; the peace, the *rest* for which she had striven came, and, as it were, folded her round in a strong and soft embrace, that comforted her very soul, and told her that the heart, the infinite heart of the Divine Father, could never change,

never grow cold or hard towards His children who trusted in Him and looked to Him in all their extremity.

So the winter passed on, and Anne was not only mentally but physically stronger. She had been much confined to the house, for she had suffered from severe colds, and the winter had not been propitious to convalescents. But now that the flowers were springing again, and the snow-wreaths on the mountains were melting in the sunshine, and the lark beginning his high carols in blue upper air, she began to go out again, to church, to the schools, to her poor people, to take up all her former work, and by degrees to go back, in seeming at least, to the old life that had been hers before Gerard Thurston came to Chalfonts.

Still, she was not strong! She said she was quite well, but she was easily tired; the daily tasks that had been so pleasurable to her were now too frequently a toil, and sometimes, strive as she would, a weary burden. Her appetite was uncertain, her bloom did not return, and there were times when her mother and her brother were secretly disquieted, fearing that her recovery was at the best fallacious, and not to be depended on. Dr. Wilson, of course, recommended a change; and early in April it was settled that she should go to Kensington, and spend the whole of the summer, and perhaps the autumn, with her cousins. Certainly she would stay till Bertie and James were married, and that would be in October, if all things went accordingly. Except of late, on Sundays, she had not seen Gerard, since their parting six months before, though their homes were so near together, and though few days had passed in which he and James had not some mutual business, that brought them into each other's society; for James was adding the drained mosses to his farm, and his whole soul was in the breakwater that was being made, about a mile from the mouth of the great estuary. He took part, too, in all Gerard's schemes for the comfort and improvement of the labourers; cottages were being

planned; the old huts were all condemned, and a night-school for old and young, which James had long vainly desired to see established, was talked of as likely to become *un fait accompli*, before the spring had deepened into summer.

Very much Anne wished to see and speak with Gerard once more, before she went away to London; but she was not quite sure that her wish was right, and therefore she said nothing about it to James or to Mrs. Musgrave, nor would she make the least movement that might result in the desired interview. But, as the days wore on, and there only remained three more before her departure, the longing to see him, to hear his voice, became a pain that was hardly to be borne, and more than once she was tempted to tell her mother that she wanted to bid farewell to Mr. Thurston; that she could not go to town till she had spoken to him, and bidden him a long adieu. But something always withheld her—something told her that she ought not to interfere. This was one of those cases in which a man or a woman must be content to refrain from taking action, and wait and see if God will make a way for the event to happen. And she had prayed earnestly, "Oh, my Father, if it be *Thy* will, if it be good and right, grant to me the consolation I so earnestly desire." And so she concluded to leave it in God's hands, and to take no step in the matter herself; for if God would bless their meeting, He would certainly send Thurston to her before she went away. If not—if he did not come—then she would know that it was "ordered" otherwise; it was not good, it was not for the best that they should meet as yet.

But, as the last days sped away, the suspense became almost unbearable. She looked for him from morning till night, and it was very hard to discipline herself to patience and to a meek content. It was the evening before the day fixed for the commencement of her journey; on the following afternoon she and James would go to

Lunechester together, and the next morning they would go on to Kensington. It was a whole year since James had seen his precious Bertie, and her winter in the Pyrenees had not been favourable to correspondence. Mrs. Musgrave had gone out, sent for to visit a poor neighbour, and James was down upon the marshes, giving directions about the newly-redeemed acres. Anne sat alone in the sitting-room, weary with her packing, wearier still with the sickness of hope deferred. Her hands were busy with some trifle of needlework; her thoughts were on that heathery moor, where, in the sweet, rosy July evening, Gerard had told his love, and they had been betrothed.

She was startled by a great rush and a bound, and Lyulph's great paws were in her lap. Her heart beat wildly. Was her wish about to be accomplished? Lyulph had visited her often, unaccompanied, coming to see her entirely on his own account. It might be so now. But, no! Before Anne had time to hope or to fear further, Judy put her head in at the door, and announced, "Mr. Thurston, please, miss!"

He came in, and Anne rose and put her hand in his; but she could not speak, and some minutes passed before either of them could say a word. It was Gerard who broke the silence:—"Anne, I heard you were going away for a long time, and I could not let you go without one word. I asked James, and he gave me leave to come."

"Yes, I wished to see you," she said, frankly.

"Why did you not let me know? I would have come sooner."

"I thought it best not, Gerard! I only wanted to tell you that I am so glad that you are going on with your work, that you have not let me be a blight upon your energies, that——"

"Anne, you have been my greatest blessing! It is I who have blighted your life; but, oh! my darling, you

know if I had guessed, if I had only dreamed,—I would have died sooner than have broken your sweet peace!"

"Hush, Gerard! My life is not blighted; it is saddened—deeply so—but not blighted."

"Anne, you do not hate me for all the sufferings I have caused you?"

"You scarcely need ask that question."

"You love me still—you will always love me?"

"Always! I will be your *friend* always! I will think of you as the dearest friend I have on earth. I will pray for you, I will bear you in my mind, and your happiness will be my happiness, your success my joy; but we cannot often meet; we can *never* talk together as in the days gone by."

"Anne! I feared you would think it your duty to forget me."

"That could not be," she replied, in the soft clear voice that rang out so sweet and true in all its accents. "I do not think God asked that of me; we women cannot forget and remember by rule; we cannot love and unlove at will, if men can. I suppose we *could* do it if God demanded it; but I cannot see that He does. Why should He make a thing only to destroy it? And this love of ours came from Him; He created it, gave it being, made it so sweet, and strong, and deep! And now He has laid His hand upon it, and made it sacred for ever."

"I do not quite understand you."

"The love that cannot die may yet be changed in its expression. Gerard, I would have been your wife had it so pleased God, and I would have thought that the lines had fallen to me in very pleasant places; had you been a very poor man I would have married you right willingly; but I need not say that! Now, it is God's will that we should *not* be husband and wife, only friends—dear and tender friends, remembering each other always as in His sight; but keeping generally apart because it is best."

"Yes, it is best; at least for the present. I feel that, Anne; I have felt it all the winter, otherwise I should have spent many an hour with you. But I would not complicate your difficulties or increase your pain."

"Thank you. But you could not be selfish!"

"I could! I used to be the most selfish creature on God's earth, for I lived for myself and to myself. You taught me a strange new lesson, Anne, that night when we met upon the frozen marsh; you told me that my life was God's, that it came from Him, and would return to Him, and that I was accountable for all the deeds done or left undone; for the employment of my time, of my wealth, my position! that I had no right so to live, as only to please myself. Slowly it came to me that you were right; all through my illness the light was gradually dawning; at last the day came, and I saw what I had to do, and I tried to do it, and God helped me. But, Anne, it is only lately that I have learned the truth in all its fulness; it is only since the winter that I have come quite to understand the mystery of my life. Anne, I have solved that problem I once thought so dark, so dreary, so utterly inscrutable—the problem of my life, of your life, of all lives!"

"I remember you asked once why people were born into the world to suffer."

"Yes; but the problem is simply, Why was *I* born?—why am I here?—what have I to do?—and whither does my life tend? Anne, I know now that my life was given me for God's glory and for my own joy! Yes! *joy!* for though heaviness may endure for a night, joy cometh in the morning: and that morning will surely arise and shine, if not here, then in the world beyond the grave. And I suppose, dear, we must be content to wait till then, for the fuller and higher joy, though in God's work we may find much quiet happiness now."

"Gerard, you give me so much joy, that at this moment

I can scarcely grieve over the separation there must be between us. God is your God and Father; Christ is your Saviour; you are willing to yield yourself to Him, to do the work that He shall give you to do, to accept the discipline He imposes. Oh, Gerard, I am very thankful!"

"And I am trying to be thankful too; but it is very difficult to sing *Te Deums* when we have lost instead of gained. Yet, that is what God asks of us!"

"Yes, because He will, in some way, surely turn the loss to gain; and we are to trust Him for it, and praise Him in anticipation."

"Ah! it is easy to praise Him when one wears the purple robes of the rejoicing conqueror, and one has one's heart's desire; but it is another thing to keep up the thanksgiving lay when one sits in sackcloth and ashes with one's desolated hopes."

"Oh! I have felt it so, Gerard; I have found it so hard —so very hard—in *everything* to give thanks. Mere passive resignation is something to attain to; it is good to say, 'Thy will be done,' but it is better still to take the trial cheerfully, to smile even when the pain is keenest, because for kindest, wisest ends, our Father God has sent it. It has done me so much good to see you, to talk to you; I shall go to London with so much more satisfaction, and I shall look upon this meeting, which I had almost concluded could not be, as upon a special blessing sent to cheer me on my way, and to comfort me when I am sad and lonely; for, Gerard, I am very weak sometimes."

"Yes, and it has comforted and strengthened me too. I have one thing more to say, Anne—it has been a terrible struggle, but I thought God required it of me,—I have forgiven Clarice, and I have written to tell her so."

"That was right; I am so glad."

"I cannot do more; even you, Anne, would not think I ought to take her back again."

"Not if—if she were as wrong as you believed her to

be! But Bertie says she is sure she has done nothing that you should cast her from you—that Clarice was foolish, proud, and in all ways but—as you thought her—wrong, and yet no disgrace to the name of Thurston."

"I cannot think it, Anne; but we will not reopen that question."

"No, it is not the question that you and I should discuss, but"—and she coloured vividly, and spoke with some shrinking—"should you not be quite sure about it yourself? would it not be *right*, if she were innocent, that you should take her back again before all the world?"

"I could not do it now; her deceit alone would interpose. I could not have in my house so treacherous a woman."

"She was wrong, but she was scarcely treacherous. However, we will not speak of that. Yes, you must go now. Good-bye, Gerard. God bless you, my friend!"

And Gerard and Lyulph went back to the solitary Holt, and next day Anne and James left the Farm, and set their faces southward.

CHAPTER XXXI.

ANNE AND CLARICE.

"BERTIE," said Anne, one day when they were walking in Kensington Gardens, "I have something in my head! there is something I want to do, and you must help me with your counsel—perhaps in other ways."

"I will help you in any way that I can, of course. What is it?"

"I want to see Clarice Thurston."

Bertie turned round and faced her cousin; she stopped

on the path while she asked, in some surprise, "Are you in earnest, Anne?"

"Quite in earnest. Where does she live?"

"I do not see what good purpose it could answer. You would torture yourself, and perhaps her also. It is out of the course of nature that you two should be friends."

"I think not; she deserves my friendship—the friendship of any virtuous woman."

"She deserves anybody's friendship," replied Bertie, bluntly; "for the matter of that, Anne, she is pure enough for the purest."

"Then I will try to deserve her friendship; I should like Gerard Thurston's wife to respect and love me."

"What good could come of it? Think again, Anne; you had better give it up."

"Bertie, I tell you if I feel assured that Clarice is all you say she is, I will never rest till she has her lawful place as the mistress of Canonbury Holt."

"Will Mr. Thurston thank you for interfering in this matter?"

"I do not know. I am thinking only of what it is right to do. It seems to me if you are right, Bertie—and I could trust your judgment more than that of many older persons—if you are right, Clarice is very much to be pitied; she has been more sinned against than sinning."

"That I do believe," returned Bertie, emphatically; "and if I were not afraid of vexing you, Anne, I should say that Thurston acted very like a fool—a madman! And *I* think he behaved abominably to Clarice, and I am glad you were not given over to him to be tortured by his jealousies, and his insulting doubts, and his imperious temper. He is fitter for a Turk than for an Englishman."

"Hush, Bertie! You are angry for Clarice's sake; you do not mean half you say."

"I think I do; and I am angry for your sake as well as for Clarice's."

"Why should you be angry on my account? He never wronged me, never grieved me; he has been goodness itself to me ever since we began to know each other."

"Well, perhaps I am a little unjust. I know from Clarice's own confession that he had no reason to question the story of her death, but I think he ought to have been quite certified. Still, why should he have doubted Adele St. Benoit, especially as the money supplies were to be stopped? I suppose you know that Clarice even now will not accept any income from her husband?"

"Yes; Aunt Temple told me so; she thinks her needlessly punctilious."

"I don't. If I were Clarice I would not touch a single sixpence of his money. I would die of want sooner than depend upon him, while he thought so harshly, so unjustly of me."

"She takes pupils?"

"Yes, in languages; French is to her as familiar, if not more so, than English. I think she speaks German equally well, and her Italian is excellent."

"There is one thing that puzzles me: Gerard told me long ago of her splendid pianoforte playing and of her lovely voice. Now, your mamma says she was no musician; she would scarcely undertake Juliet's practising. Georgy and Hilda were never taught by her. And, as for singing, she never heard her so much as hum a tune, or join in the hymns at church."

"She told me herself that music was so inseparably connected in her mind with her happy married life, and with all the misery that came after, that she could not bear it. It was the one thing to which she could not bring herself—to touch the pianoforte. Therefore, in her governess life, she did not undertake to instruct in music or in singing; she never said that she could not play, only that she could not undertake any piano lessons; she was very explicit on this point, I believe, when she engaged

herself to teach my sisters. As for her voice, that was really gone; she lost it in the long and almost fatal illness which tempted her to impose upon her husband the story of her death."

"I understand. Now, Bertie, where does she live?"

"She lives in the neighbourhood of Clapham; it is a good locality for pupils; she could not have succeeded in any out-of-the-way place. There are people about Clapham-common, and Streatham, and Tooting, who are only too thankful to secure her pure Parisian accent for their daughters, and, her German and Italian being equally superior to what one can generally get even on high terms in this country, you may be sure she does not lack patronage. And she could not be idle, she says; she wishes to be as constantly employed as her health and strength permit."

"Is Clapham far from here?"

"Yes, a good way; she has lodgings in the Wandsworth-road. Do you really mean to go, Anne?"

"Yes, I am quite resolved. How can I go?"

"We will drive together in the carriage over Chelsea-bridge; then we will take a cab. I want to go and see my old schoolfellow, Nelly Stanley; she has married somebody and gone to live on the common there. I have her last letter by me with the exact address; she is very anxious that I should go to see her. Mrs. Yeoville I think her name is; we met her sister-in-law, Lady Yeoville, the other day, at Mrs. Snagger's *matinée musicale*."

"Very well. May we go to-morrow?"

"The day after, please; I should like to write to Nelly—it would be so stupid to go and find her out."

"Of course. I did not think of that; the day after to-morrow then, Bertie. Thank you very much."

"This is the house," said Bertie, when on the Thursday, according to arrangement, they found themselves before a dull-looking, respectable semi-detached villa or

cottage in the Wandsworth-road. "I will go on to Mrs. Yeoville's, and you will join me there, if you leave here first. This is Nelly's card—you cannot miss the house; but probably I shall return to you. If you have anything at all to say to Madame Gerard you will have a great deal."

Bertie stayed only till it was ascertained that Madame Gerard was at home; she saw Anne admitted, and then she went upon her way to Clapham-common to talk over old times with pretty Nelly Yeoville.

The servant who opened the door to Anne was newly-arrived in the house, and supposing her to be one of Madame's pupils—for she had several who came to her—without inquiring her name, admitted her to the little drawing-room where Madame Gerard was sitting.

Clarice was not surprised at the advent of a stranger; she imagined, of course, that it was a question of lessons or pupils, and she rose and bowed quietly, and placed a chair for her visitor; then, seating herself, waited gravely for the expected communication. Anne felt at once nervous and reassured—nervous when she thought of her errand—reassured as she looked in the quiet, faded face—sad, and sweet, and serious, but beaming, she felt certain, with the impress of the peace which this world giveth not. The woman before her, she knew at once, was not a sinner as Gerard had accounted her; also as Anne gazed into the mournful yet truthful eyes she was convinced that Clarice's yea would be yea, and her nay nay. She would speak the truth, the simple, unadulterated truth, nor seek to palliate the errors of the past.

"I ought to have sent in my card," began Anne, tremulously; "but I did not know that the servant was bringing me into your presence."

"It is of no consequence," replied Clarice; "you are thinking perhaps of taking lessons, or you have sisters? you are too young to have daughters who could profit by my French and German."

"No, I did not come to see Madame Gerard. I came to make the acquaintance of Mrs. Thurston if she will let me."

Clarice started and coloured violently; then all the crimson faded from her lips, and even her lips were ashen-white.

"You are——?" she gasped. She could not remember Anne's name at that moment, but she never doubted who her visitor was.

"I am Anne Musgrave; I am staying at Tylney House with my aunt and cousins, and I felt that I must see you; I wanted so much to know you, to talk to you."

"Why should you wish to see me?" asked Clarice in hard, unnatural tones, quite unlike those in which she had spoken before. "Do you not believe me to be a very wicked woman?"

"Bertie does not think so; she has told me all the story, every word of it, as you told her, and I think you are hardly dealt with. I think you were wrong, fatally wrong, in acting the falsehood you did; for out of evil good can never come—that is, between man and man; but, Mrs. Thurston, I think, too, that your punishment far exceeds your sin."

"I do not know. I sinned in many ways, though I was quite innocent of the great crime that Gerard laid to my charge. I was proud, passionate, godless in all my words and deeds. I deserved the misery that came upon me. But *you*——!"

"We will not speak of myself yet. Why did you not prove to your husband that you were innocent?"

"I could not then. Perhaps I did not try. It was just this, Miss Musgrave. I was a foolish, thoughtless girl. I had never known a mother's love. I had been brought up unwisely; first of all compelled to a life of monotony, and self-denial, and constant self-repression; then left without a guide or friend to make my own way in the

world. I had been under so many restraints, and subjected to so much harshness, that I scarcely wonder at myself now, when I recal those days of emancipation, and remember how foolish I was, how vain, how proud of the beauty I possessed! I had many suitors, but among them all I preferred Mr. Thurston; he was the only man whom I ever loved, though there was one who was my ardent admirer, and whom, doubtless, I should have married if Gerard had not come in my way, and taken my heart by storm. I gave my heart to him, to Gerard, hastily, I know; but it was given unreservedly, and for ever! From that hour he reigned in it alone; no one ever possessed the tithe of a tithe of it after it was his! God knows that I speak the truth."

"How could Gerard be so deceived? Were appearances so very much against you?"

"They were; but it was my own fault. I sowed the wind and reaped the whirlwind, Miss Musgrave; and I am reaping it now, and I shall reap it till I die. Gerard and I were very happy for a time only. I always felt as if he treated me like a spoiled child. As the months passed on I felt this still more keenly. I was exacting. I had no discrimination. I reproached him, I scarcely knew with what. I became alternately pettish and sullen, till he was wearied, and absented himself as much as possible. Then I began to see that he had never truly loved me; he had admired my fair face—it was a fair face then; better it had been coarse and homely! And he was enraptured with my singing; I had a voice like a lark's in those young days! But the mere passion which he had entertained for me soon died out. I might, I believe, have kept it alive; it might have grown into something better, and higher, and more enduring, if I had not been like the foolish woman, who plucks her house down with her hands. If I had acted wisely, if I had been gentle and forbearing, if I had known the meek and quiet spirit that

is better than gold and pearls, or genius, things might have been far otherwise. Gerard's temper was haughty and imperious; mine was a match for his; but while he wounded me to the quick with his scorn, and coldness, and proud contempt (and oh, how I exasperated him!), I requited him with measure for measure, and something more; for I tried to torture him, I strove to make him tremble; I wanted to let him see, to make him feel, that if he had ceased to care about my beauty, and my accomplishments, if he despised my love, there were others whom I could rule with a glance, with a word!—others, *one* especially, whom I could sway as easily as the wind sways the branches of a tree. I will not tell you all that part of the tale, unless you desire to hear it, Miss Musgrave. I will only say that I *played* at sin, and was counted a veritable sinner. When I found that I had defeated my own ends, I was nearly wild. *Once*, most solemnly I swore that I was Gerard's true and faithful wife—that not in word or thought had I ever for one moment swerved from my allegiance. I was not believed, and I was too proud to seek to justify myself. Gerard told me to leave him, and I went. For one thing I was really frightened, and I dared not disobey him; I dared not linger under the same roof with him after he had told me to be gone. Partly in anger, partly in terror, I left him; but I did not think it was for ever; I hoped, since I was really innocent, that, when he grew calmer, he would see that he had been hasty and unjust, and recal me. Alas! I did not know that I had been slandered to him, and I waited and waited, but no recal came; only once he wrote, renouncing me for ever, in terms of hate and loathing, yet proposing for me the means of a handsome sustenance. I went away into Switzerland, then into Austrian Italy; my friend Adele St. Benoit and I lived together. I was very, very ill; my life was despaired of for many weeks; it was months before I was totally convalescent, and I arose from

my bed of sickness with my beauty faded, and my voice weak and thin—a mere wreck of that which I had been a year before! I was changed, too, at heart; the old Clarice was gone, never to return. I wished to spend the remainder of my days in obscurity and penitence. I had the darkest views about religion; I had thought by self-humiliation and self-sacrifice to atone for the past. Still I was in earnest; I was sincere before God and towards man! Then it was that the idea of setting my husband free occurred to me. I wished him to account me dead, as I virtually was to him; and I persuaded Adele St. Benoit—you know the rest. We arranged it all so naturally that Gerard was certain to be deceived; especially would he be convinced when he found that no further demands were to be made upon the bank at Zurich; he could not doubt unless he had suspected me of any ulterior motive, which he did not. I soon found out that I had made a mistake, but it was too late to retract; after awhile, when a purer light came into my soul, I saw how greatly I had erred, but I lacked the courage to write to Gerard and tell him that I had deceived him, that his hated wife was not in the grave where he believed her to be. I shall never forget what I felt when first Mr. Temple mentioned Chalfonts to me, saying that his elder daughters were visiting at the Holt Farm. Of course I knew all about Chalfonts and Canonbury Holt, the long-lost inheritance of the Thurstons, which my husband was hoping to redeem. Then came, like a thunderbolt, the news of his intended marriage! It was not that I was astonished; he had been, as he believed, a widower for six years, and I had given him up entirely. I scarcely felt one jealous pang when I knew of his love for you; but then, and not till then, I saw the enormity of my crime of deceit; for the consequences were before me. Of course I knew his contemplated marriage never could be legal, and I was terrified at the position in which I found myself.

To think of all families in the world that I should have entered the Temple family, with whom he was about to ally himself in marriage! I was in an agony of doubt as to what I ought to do. Should I confess and prevent the marriage, or should I go away and sedulously hide myself from him, never letting him know of my existence? On this course I decided. I was going to Paris. I never meant to return to England, though I hate a Continental life. You know how an accident overturned this plan. Georgy had carried that book downstairs without my knowledge; it was one of my treasures, one of my few cherished reminiscences of happier days, for Gerard bought it before we began to be miserable. That is all, Miss Musgrave, all my story: nearly all my trouble has been of my own making; and yet, if Gerard had not been so hard with me, if he had said but one kind word, I think —I do not know—I might have been his happy, honoured wife all these years."

Anne could not stay longer then, for Clarice had an engagement at Tooting, and she must hurry to the omnibus. But she came again and again, and she wrote to Mademoiselle St. Benoit, and to another person who had known the Thurstons just previous to their separation. All her intercourse with Clarice, all that she saw and heard, tended more deeply to convince her of Gerard's error; and she felt that he ought to be made to perceive it, for perceiving it she knew he would at once confess it, and make all possible reparation. At least, he would give Clarice her right place in the world again, if he could not take her to his heart That Clarice loved him still she could not doubt; if only he withdrew the bitter charge against her, owning himself mistaken and guilty of rash judgment; if only he called her back to him with one single word or glance, she would go and be to him a true, loving, and unselfish wife! And Anne said to herself, "It is only what ought to be, and it *must be!*"

CHAPTER XXXII.

ANNE'S VICTORY.

FOR some time Anne was utterly at a loss how to proceed; the business was not one she could take in hand herself, and she could not tell in whom to repose confidence. James and her mother were so far away; they had heard one version of the painful story, and they believed it; they could scarcely be brought to look upon it from an entirely new point of view, simply from her assurances; and as to going into details by letter, it seemed impossible. Her Aunt Temple would be useless as a counsellor, yet there was no one else with whom she felt that it would be right or kind to discuss Gerard's private affairs. Should she go back herself to Chalfonts, and compel Gerard to believe in Clarice? From that course she shrank more than from any other; she would do all she could, only she wished, if it were possible, not to appear personally at all. Still, it would not do, from any scruples of false delicacy, to leave poor Clarice to her fate. She had been left to that long enough, and Anne was sure that she would never be at peace herself till at least every way had been tried, every effort made, to reconcile the two so long isolated from each other.

Bertie could sympathise and agree with her, but she could not advise; Mrs. Temple, whenever Madame Gerard was referred to, shook her head as if deploringly, and looked mysterious. Clarice herself did not seem to have a single friend in England who could render her any service. Anne was almost in despair; she could only pray hourly to be guided, to be helped, and wait till help and guidance came, as in due time she doubted not they would. The waiting sorely tried Bertie's patience; she was eager for matters to be put into train; she was

Quixotic on the subject of Madame Gerard's affairs, and even her approaching marriage did not so entirely engross her attention, but that many thoughts were given to the lagging enterprise to which Anne in some sort had pledged herself.

"When shall we have the beginning of the end?" she said one day, impatiently. "Anne, is there no one to whom we could go?"

Anne shook her head. "No one to whom we *might* go; remember that, if Clarice is not righted, we may by injudicious proceeding leave her in worse circumstances than ever! The world must not connect Madame Gerard with the despised Mrs. Thurston; and it would be agony to Gerard to have the old story revived, and his wrongs, real or imagined, bruited all about the country!"

"I see. Anne, I am afraid of mamma; she does talk so."

"She promised me yesterday that she would be more careful. She does not wish to injure Clarice, but she cannot forgive her for entering this house under false colours. Of course, she is ready to believe the very worst of her."

"I do not wonder very much. It does look like an ugly trick, Anne—aye, and it was an ugly trick too; there never, no never, can be any comeliness in underhandedness. I think her motives were as good as bad motives could be, but they were bad for all that. I believed in her, poor thing; I stood by her, when even the servants, perceiving that she was in disgrace, eyed her disdainfully. I pitied her; but I never flattered her. She had done a wrong thing, and it came out just when she least expected it—just when she would have given worlds to hide it. Oh! there is nothing like being straightforward."

"You are right, and Clarice feels the same now. She had felt it long before the *dénouement* came; only she had hedged herself about with difficulties, and she knew not

how to escape, or, indeed, whether she ought to try to escape at all."

"It is a great comfort to her that Gerard has forgiven her."

"Yes; but he forgives her for faults she has never committed. Oh, Bertie! I wish mamma were here."

"Aunt Hannah? she is the very wisest of women, and she is middle-aged, and all that, and a matron; she could take steps honourably that we girls could not dare to think about. Why did we not think of that before? Write and ask her to come, Anne; then she can stay for the wedding."

"But you know she refused to come on that account; she has been so little from home since papa died. Of late years she has not been, I think, to St. Ulpha's or to Lunechester more than once or twice a year."

"Then it is time she had a little change. She is not old."

"Only fifty-four, and not at all an invalid."

"I tell you what, Anne—I want her, and she must come. I will write, and you must write; we will tell her our double reasons for wishing her presence here. *We* at least will have no finessing; let us be open as the day."

"With all my heart," replied Anne; "only we must be prudent too. Mamma is just the person to depend upon in every way; and Gerard would trust her so completely. Though he is not so many years younger, he regards her with a most filial reverence."

"I am not surprised. One cannot help reverencing Aunt Hannah, as well as loving her; she is so wise, so true, so tender. It is a great joy to me to think that in October she will be my mother."

And so the letters were written, and, after some demur, Mrs. Musgrave consented to come, and in due time she arrived, escorted by Dr. Redmayne, who had taken a sudden turn, as he said, "to run up to town himself, and

rub off the rust of twenty years' rusticities!" James could not be spared from home till a day or two before the wedding.

It was September now, and everybody was very busy. Amy was just engaged to a brainless, smooth-faced young officer, of good family and excellent prospects—that is, prospects of plenty of money; and she was triumphantly elate, and full of compassion for Bertie's perspective of perennial dumplings, and the husband who would eat them, and wear thick boots, and never, probably, take her out to evening parties. But Bertie rejoiced in her dumpling-loving husband, though she privately determined that he should wear gloves on week-days as well as Sundays, when they were married. She did not envy Amy her boy-lover, with his delicate hands and small, exquisitely-booted feet, his simpering, unwhiskered face, and his very namby-pamby style of conversation. No; not though he was possible heir to no one knew how many thousands a year, and to a title, if only he survived an elder brother, an uncle, and half-a-dozen cousins. Bertie cared for none of these things. She had no objection, of course, to small hands and high-arched insteps—what well-born woman does dislike such aristocratic specialities? But unless they go with brains and principle, they are certainly of very small account.

Georgy, about to be introduced, and charmed at the prospect of being Miss Temple, was perfectly, though languidly, happy, and she fell in love, and fell out again, so many times, that she almost marvelled at herself. Hilda was in raptures, contemplating a long visit to Bertie; and Juliet gossiped to her heart's content, and told everybody, in confidence, that Madame Gerard had done something very wicked, and had been sent away, and that her cousin Anne and Mr. Thurston had quarrelled and were not going to be married.

Mrs. Musgrave went to see Clarice, and she, like Anne

and Bertie, was convinced in her own mind, though it took longer to satisfy her than it had taken to satisfy the younger women. But, once clear that Clarice was under a false aspersion, she agreed with her niece and daughter that, if possible, she must be cleared, and she set herself very diligently to work to collect evidence, feeling sure that Clarice's unsupported assertions would go for very little with her husband.

Adele St. Benoit had not answered Anne's last letter, and that looked ill, Mrs. Musgrave thought. She could say so much in Mrs. Thurston's favour. She had been her bosom friend all through the troubles, and her testimony would be invaluable. Why did she not write ?

Anne was beginning another letter to her one day, when the servant informed her that a foreign lady was waiting for her in the drawing-room. She had given her name, but Mr. Biggs did not remember it—indeed, he was not sure he had rightly heard it. Anne went down, and found Mademoiselle St. Benoit, who came in person, full of eagerness to clear Clarice from every imputation save that of foolishness. She had waited to collect proofs. She knew better than Clarice herself how greatly she had been slandered—how black against her were appearances; and she would not come to England till she could bring with her such evidence as even Mr. Thurston himself could not disallow. She had sought out the calumniator, and had been successful beyond her own most sanguine expectations; for the wretched woman who had sworn falsely to her mistress's injury was dying, and she was but too thankful to make such reparation as was possible. Her deposition, which was most plainly worded, and in which she did not spare herself, was taken down by a notary in the presence of a priest and magistrate. Then it was placed in the hands of Messrs. Schweiden, of Dresden, who had by this time communicated with Mr Mottram. The deposition of Lisette, the waiting woman,

the testimony of Adele herself, and the solemn declaration of Fritz Pfitzinger, the person with whom Clarice's name had been so injuriously associated, seemed to be a perfect combination of facts. Even Mrs. Temple became excited, and was anxious to know what Mr. Mottram thought about it.

Mr. Mottram, instructed by Franz Schweiden, had had his doubts before; but now he carefully examined every separate link of the chain of evidence. He went into the whole affair with a scrupulous minuteness that rather wearied some who were deeply interested. Every circumstance, and every phase of circumstance, he turned over and over again, viewing it in all possible aspects, and trying to regard it as something that must be upset in spite of everything. But at length, having satisfied himself fully, he pronounced the evidence given to be "perfectly conclusive!" Clarice Thurston, *née* Craven, now called Madame Gerard, was free from the serious imputation which had been cast upon her! That she had been very foolish, and, in a certain sense, very wrong, there could be no doubt; the Schweidens said so, and Mr. Mottram echoed the remark; but the English lawyer added that his respected client, Mr. Thurston, had been mad with pride, and if at the time he had only used his senses, and asked half-a-dozen simple questions, all the scandal and all the misery might have been avoided.

Gerard, summoned by Mr. Mottram, came again to London; and even his prejudices were overcome, and he owned that he had been rash and cruel. Both had been wrong; but, of the two, Clarice had been wronged most deeply. Thurston remembered the letter he had written to her, in which he had cast her from him; no eye but her own had ever rested on those bitter, crushing lines, but he could recall them now; and, assured of Clarice's innocence, he scarcely wondered that she had acted as she did, and tried as far as she could to

sever the last tie that bound them together in this world.

Before, he had forgiven her; now, he entreated her forgiveness, but he did not ask her to come back to him again. Dr. Redmayne remonstrated, and spoke of duty—of vows that could never be rescinded, save under the pressure of certain contingencies that Thurston himself was now as ready as any one to declare had never had existence. But Anne, when she met him, said, "Gerard, you will never be happy till you give Clarice her proper position; you must take her to Canonbury Holt, and reinstate her in all her dignities."

"Anne, I cannot; I will not give her the place that was to have been yours! It is her own fault that I ever cared for you."

"You will give her the place that is right, Gerard; she is your wife—nothing can alter that fact. She loves you, poor thing!—loves you tenderly; take her back, Gerard, for my sake; take her back, and be very tender with her."

"For *your* sake, Anne? Ah! what is it you ask?"

"Perhaps I ought not to ask it so; but you will not do it for her sake. You cannot be too kind after—after all that she has suffered; and if she was wrong—forgive me!—you were wrong also, and you were the stronger, and the wiser, and the older."

"I own it, Anne; I have owned it long—I was very wrong! I sinned against Clarice in my anger and implacable resentment. I sinned against God also! I will make all amends I can. The poor child shall have her lawful name, and as large an income as she pleases; I will acknowledge her as my wife, and speak of her in the world's ear with all respect; but I *cannot* take her to Canonbury Holt."

In the autumn moonlight that evening Anne and Gerard lingered long, walking round Mrs. Temple's garden, and talking earnestly. No one heard their conversation; but

when they came into the house again a serene smile was on Anne's fair face; she had conquered! Clarice was to go home with her husband to Canonbury Holt!

Several weeks more, and James and Bertie were married, and a little later Mrs. Musgrave and her daughter went abroad; for Anne's health again failed rapidly, and she was ordered thorough change of scene and air.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

BERTIE AT HOME.

NEARLY five years have elapsed since James and Bertie became man and wife, since Gerard took Clarice home to Canonbury Holt, and since Anne and her mother left English shores for a winter in the Pyrenees. And many changes have passed over quiet Chalfonts since then, and Mrs. Temple's household is no longer the same, for Amy and Georgy are both married, and Hilda lives almost entirely with her favourite sister in the North; but Mrs. Musgrave and her daughter are still on their travels, though they are expected home before the end of the summer, and great are the rejoicings at the Holt Farm in anticipation of the long-looked-for event. Neither Anne nor her mother had contemplated so prolonged an absence; they had passed the first winter at Pau, and they had intended spending the spring in Italy, and the height of the summer in Switzerland, returning to England some time in the autumn. But just as they were breaking up their little establishment at Pau, old friends of Mrs. Musgrave arrived from Montauban on their way to Spain, and they were persuaded to join them in making a tour through the Peninsular. As Mrs. Musgrave said, they were not

wanted at home—two such energetic persons as James and Bertie more than filled their places at Chalfonts, and there were no special duties clamouring for their return. Besides, having once crossed the Channel, it seemed a pity not to see and do as much as possible, and Spain was a country of which comparatively so little was known, whereas France and Switzerland were always easy of access, and could be visited at any time, when one had once got into the habit of travelling abroad.

Then Anne's health was not as thoroughly established as could be wished, and for many reasons it did not seem advisable to take her back too speedily to Chalfonts. So the Musgraves and their friends spent a very pleasant twelve months in Spain and Portugal, and then the former went to Rome in time for the solemnities of Holy Week, and afterwards they retreated to some well-known summer haunts in the Apennines; and then they were at Venice and Florence for awhile, and at last they found themselves almost settled down in one of the loveliest and greenest of Swiss valleys, and they had tarried, making many dear friends and learning to feel quite at home at the foot of the mighty snow-crowned Alps, that seemed now quite as familiar as their own fair Fellshire hills.

As for Chalfonts itself, it looks much as when we saw it for the first time, nearly six long years ago. There stands the grand old Priory-church, grey, solemn, and stately as ever, and as yet unrestored; there lies the quaint little town, with its quiet market-place, its square tower, nestling under the green hills, that in their turn seem reposing under the shadow of the loftier mountains; there is the handsome rectory in its brilliant garden, and Dr. Wilson's pretty white house, where yet he dwells, a confirmed old bachelor, as people say; and there is the Holt Farm with its tall chimneys, and its high gables, more flower-wreathed than ever; and Canonbury Holt itself, looking far over sea and land, as stately a mansion as you will see

in all that country-side, if you except the magnificent, time-honoured seat of his Grace of Aldingham.

The marshes are nearly all drained, and the mosses are in a high state of cultivation. Gerard Thurston and James Musgrave have worked well together, and many acres of waste and dangerous land are redeemed from the sea, and the whole affair promises to be a very profitable undertaking. They have worked together also in the improving of the general aspect of affairs; many of the Cockleham fishermen live now in decent cottages, and fewer and fewer of the wretched huts that disgraced the neighbourhood not many years ago are to be seen, if, every few months, you make the rounds of Canonbury and Cockleham. The farm labourers are better housed and better fed than heretofore; also their spiritual needs are cared for, and their children are better taught; for the Duchess's school is not now the only one where the rising generation are trained in the paths of piety and usefulness. The "Works," as they are called, have brought many labourers to the spot; and at the head of the great marsh, where Anne saved Thurston's life, there is quite a colony of pretty healthy little tenements, each one with its own small "allotment;" and, the sluggish streams being now confined within certain channels, a rich alluvial soil is left in many places, which already produces abundant crops, and the whole space, even that which seemed only arid sand in the old time, is improving so rapidly, that Mr. Crake says it reminds him of the text which declares, "The desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose."

But there are other changes also, which have taken place since Anne left Chalfonts—changes in the families about whom I have tried to interest you; and, above all, in the Holt Farm people, who are taking up more space than in those days when only Mrs. Musgrave and her son and daughter lived there with their servants. The blue-room is no longer shut up, or used only for chance visi-

tors—it is the bed-chamber of the heads of the house; and another large room, that was given over to old books and pamphlets, and decayed furniture, and lumber, and rubbish of all sorts, Bertie has made the nursery; for in some sort the previsions of Mrs. Temple have been realised; she really is "grandmamma" to four little Musgraves, who, however, are not *unmannerly*, and Bertie is grown much stouter and rosier, but she is not yet "loud-voiced," and the feeding of the calves and the frying of bacon she generally leaves to her servants, who hold her up to their congeners as a very model of mistresses. Mrs. James Musgrave, I must say, is considered a very handsome woman —far handsomer as a matron than as a girl.

It was a splendid summer evening, and Bertie was sitting in the parlour nursing her baby, a fine little girl of four months old, while the next youngest, a curly-headed maiden of two and a half, came tripping up with her nurse to say good-night to mamma. This was little Bertie; the baby was Anne, and used to be called Annie generally, and the two boys were Jamie and Reginald.

"Auntie Hilda! Auntie Hilda! oh! and papa!" shrieked the little girl, as glancing through the window she saw her father and her aunt coming across the lawn; "me stop and kiss them, mamma?",

"Yes, you may stay, only you must go directly you have said good-night," was mamma's reply; and in another minute James and his sister-in-law walked in, and Miss Bertie, albeit she was in bed-time array, sprang from her nurse's arms, and nestled her pretty face against her papa's, which boasted by this time a beard almost equal to Mr. Thurston's.

"Now, papa! she must go indeed! give her to nurse, please," said Bertie, as papa and the little one seemed inclined to inaugurate a game of romps, Aunt Hilda looking on approvingly. "Two little minutes more, mamma?" pleaded wee Bertie coaxingly; but great Bertie steadily

replied, "No, my daughter; you must give papa one more kiss, and go!"

"We must do as mamma tells us," quoth papa, gravely; "mamma knows best about little children's bed-time." And he pressed the rosy lips to his own, stroked the bright rings of hair, and patted the small fat hands that reluctantly untwined themselves from his neck, and gave Miss Bertie into her nurse's arms.

"It is really too bad to send the child to bed, while the sun shines so brightly," said James, as he stretched himself in his easy chair. "Mamma, you are a regular tyrant about bed-time; you command, and we must obey."

"And papa is a regular dear old simpleton about all such matters; he would keep the little things up till no one knows what hour, and then he would see them grow pale and thin, and the boys would never be fine young men such as their father was when I first saw him!"

"Nor the girls bonnie lasses, such as their mother was, I suppose?"

"Decidedly not! Early hours, plenty of fresh air, abundance of clear, cold water, and plain food, are what children require if they are to grow up with any sort of constitution. Are there finer boys and girls than ours in all the country? Look at baby now; was there ever such a fine, good-tempered little thing of four months old before? See how firm her limbs are!—there now! See how tightly she holds my finger, and how chubby the wee hand is!" And Bertie took up the fat little paw, and, holding it to her lips, seemed rather inclined to devour it

"My dear, I am convinced that you are an excellent manager of children!" was her husband's rejoinder. "I am sure our four give less trouble, and are the source of fewer anxieties, than Amy's one sickly specimen of whom your mother is so proud. Little Adeline is eighteen months older than our Bertie, and yet Bertie is the finer child."

"I should think so!" replied Mrs. James, with a sudden elevation of her saucy *nez retroussé*. "Pray, my dear, do not compare your own daughter with Miss Adeline Amy Beatrice Conyngham! Poor little soul! I pity her from my heart; there she is, scarcely four years old, sitting up till nine or ten o'clock at night, and eating and drinking all kinds of pernicious food, and allowed to indulge in the most wonderful freaks—poor, unhappy little Adeline!"

"Mrs. Temple thinks her a most charming child, I believe?"

"Ah, yes! Mamma says she is the most aristocratic little creature! and certainly, when she is tolerably well, and in a good temper, she is very pretty, especially when she comes down to dessert, all be-sashed and be-frilled, and resplendent in delicate lace, or embroidered muslin and sky-blue silk. But then, if a third helping of pine-apple is objected to, or if the supply of guava jelly is at all limited, or if champagne is refused, it not unfrequently happens that Miss Adeline is borne away shrieking to the nursery, to the great discomfiture of her maid, upon whom she takes summary vengeance of tooth and claw, and of course to the scandal of her parents, who, however, apologise for her very excitable temperament, which they characterise as 'nervous.'"

"What would you do with her, Bertie, if she were given to your charge? Would you whip her?"

"Poor little darling! *No!* No child really needs whipping; if it comes to such a pass, it is the mother and father who ought to be whipped for not having exercised the proper discipline betimes. A baby soon learns to know that your yea means *yea*, and your nay, *nay!*—if you permit disobedience in little things, that are scarcely of any account in themselves, you will have a struggle presently when it is absolutely necessary that obedience should be enforced; and the longer the shilly-shallying system continues the fiercer will be the strife when

it comes, as come it will, sooner or later, to your own great sorrow and your child's great hurt. No! I would not whip poor little Addy, but I should let her scream herself into a fit of exhaustion once or twice, and I should shut her up in a light room where she would not be frightened, and where she could not hurt herself, and where she would not annoy anybody. Finding herself utterly disregarded, and never gaining her ends by any display of violence, she would gradually abandon her noisy demonstrations and become a reasonable child. But, James, I should be very sorry to have anything to do with my niece; I should not like the responsibility, nor would the example fail to injure our own darlings. I hope you are not thinking of proposing her coming here to Amy?"

"I am not, indeed! I would not have the little nuisance in the house on any terms; besides, Amy would never trust her with us—we are barbarians, you know!"

"Ah! well, it does not matter; we are very happy barbarians; and now that you wear gloves, and trim your beard occasionally, I am quite proud of you. What have you been doing since dinner?"

"I have been up to the High-Fell allotment, parcelling out the ground for next year."

"Will it come to any good?"

"I feel sure it will; all in good time, for certain kinds of grain; but there will be splendid crops on the Cockleham Mosses next year if we have anything of a season."

"If the sea will be good enough to keep out!"

"What nonsense, Bertie, when it has kept out ever since the work began; and in a few months we shall have the railway, and there will be a splendid embankment."

"Suppose the water did get in, James?"

"Suppose you are a dear little goose!"

"But if it did?"

"The results would be terrible; I fear there would be loss of life; we should be nearly ruined, and Gerard would be—well! more than inconvenienced."

"Have you seen anything of Gerard or Clarice to-day?"

"No! but that reminds me!—dear me, but you will scold me, Bertie! I met the postman as I walked into the town, and he said there was a letter for me at the office, and I went and fetched it, and it was from my mother. Here it is!"

"What does she say?"

"They are coming home at last; they will be here towards the end of next month."

"Oh, that is good news indeed! so good that I can afford to forgive you, you stupid James. I wonder if Anne is much altered."

"Sure to be altered in all these years; but my mother says her health is quite established. She has had a trying time of it, Bertie."

"Trying, indeed! But she has come well out of it And it was always worse with her, I am sure, than any one supposed; I know, when she took it so calmly, that her heart was nearly breaking! No wonder her health failed."

"I suppose, by all the rules of sentiment, she ought to have broken her heart entirely!"

"My dear James, hearts don't so easily break; at least, they don't break so as to cause the death of their owners. It used to be the fashion in the old romances to make all ill-used heroines expire gracefully of decline, or else they had brain fever, and shuffled off this mortal coil without more ado. Of course, this was because the authors did not know what else to do with them; anything was better than leaving their Angelinas and Rosalindas to uninteresting old-maidism. Our novelists are wiser now, and depict life more as it really is."

"I have no doubt an unmarried woman may be extremely happy; as happy, indeed, as a married one; in some cases far happier!"

"Oh, no, no!" interposed Bertie, drawing herself up; "the happiest creature in all the world is a truly-happy married woman. It must be miserable to have no one belonging to you;—no husband, no children, no tiny treasures like this one!" And she gently kissed the babe sleeping on her bosom.

"My dear! it is just as God pleases. And I fully believe there is no condition of life in which one may not be happy or useful. Anne will be an old maid, I suppose; but I am sure she will be a cheerful woman, reflecting everywhere the sunshine that is in her own heart. She will live for others, and in others' happiness she will find her own."

"I dare say she will!" replied Bertie, shrugging her shoulders, and thereby disturbing the baby; "but it must be a very negative sort of happiness after all! It's all very fine talking, James; and of course if one cannot have the best things, it is wise to content one's self with the second-best; and there is an immense advantage in being able to resign one's self to the inevitable, and all that sort of thing; still, I think, after all, it can be little more than a bare content that one can arrive at. There is a wide difference between content and satisfaction."

"There is a difference, I grant you; but Anne, I think, is satisfied—satisfied that all is for the best; the very best, because God has willed it so. She is coming home to be really happy, I am assured."

"I often wonder if Gerard is quite happy."

"Happier, truly so, than he has ever been in his life. He is working, he is full of consideration for others; there are scores of people who bless his very name. I think, on the whole, he is very glad that Anne has stayed away so long."

"It was the wisest thing she could do, since it would scarcely have done for Gerard to abandon his post. Nothing could have been worse for him at such a juncture than to have taken up his old wandering life again, with only Swingleswairy and Lyulph for his companions. In spite of all convictions and good resolutions, the temptation would have been very strong to return to the old, selfish, self-absorbed existence—to the lost, useless state of being—from which Anne herself seems to have aroused him."

"They will be the best and truest of friends now, I am sure."

"They have been that ever since they knew each other; but it was best that their friendship should remain awhile without expression. It will be a happy meeting for all parties; Clarice was asking me only last week if Anne ever meant to come back again. You know that they have corresponded all this time, though not very regularly?"

"Yes, I knew that letters were occasionally exchanged. They are a noble pair, those two women, Anne and Clarice; many in their singular and painful position would have ended in cordially detesting one another."

"It is not in Anne's nature to detest any one; she never could hate, however forcible and continuous the provocation. As for Clarice, she owes everything to Anne; there would have been no explanation, no reconciliation, no anything, had Anne never concerned herself about it. Ah! Clarice may well bless her, and love her too."

"Still, Bertie, Clarice must remember that her husband has loved Anne very dearly; she knows how much it cost him to give her up, to break off the intercourse that was so sweet, and pure, and good."

"Clarice knows, also, that but for her own fault Gerard

would never have thought of Anne; and she cannot but feel that she was the source of much suffering to them both. She must revere, both in her husband and in Anne, the principle which caused them to sacrifice every inclination, every natural weakness, to duty. I am sure she will be as ready as any one to welcome Anne back to Chalfonts."

"Could you not give baby to nurse, and come out with me for a walk? There will be a splendid sunset to-night, and it will be high tide presently."

"I will come; I was longing for a walk, only I thought you must be tired. But the evening tides are never much, because they are always in the neap; next week we shall have some good spring tides, I see by the almanacs. I shall have the boys taken down to Cockleham for a bathe every morning. I do like the spring tides."

"We shall have some unusually high tides in September, or early in October. I hope it will not turn out stormy, or I confess I shall be anxious for our new sea wall."

"Oh! I dare say it will be fine," said Bertie, whose way it was always to repress her lord and master when he was unduly sanguine, and always to encourage him if he seemed inclined to take a desponding view of things. "Now then, kiss baby, and I will take her to nurse; isn't she beautiful!—so fast asleep, with her little thumb in her tiny rosebud of a mouth? And James, my dear, I shall tell Judy to make you some dumplings for supper."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

QUITE HAPPY.

A FEW weeks later, and James and Bertie were at Keirmouth, anxiously awaiting the train which was to bring back the travellers to their home; for Anne had said she should not feel that she was in her own north country till she had crossed the River Keir, and, having crossed it, she should all at once have a sense of being at home again. The August afternoon was very brilliant; the hills showed purple in a soft, transparent haze; the bay, all rippled over with tiny, diamonded wavelets, glittered in the golden sunshine; and the quiet village of Keirmouth looked as if it were taking its after-dinner nap, till the fiery dragon of a locomotive should come up, and rouse it from its slumbers. Bertie remarked how sleepy the station and the houses round it looked; how drowsily the bees hummed about the hollyhocks in the station-master's little garden; how lazily dogs and children and cattle seemed, lying about everywhere, as if it were indeed a land where "it was always afternoon!" and James replied, "Let them doze on, their day of ease is almost done; in another year or so this will be a junction, and I foresee an immense increase of traffic and work accordingly. How good it will be for St. Ulpha's! It will be able to send its hæmatite ore anywhere and everywhere; and we are to have a station, Bertie, that is to serve both Cockleham and Chalfonts, though it will be a good long way from the latter; still, after all this journeying to Keirmouth and to Farleton, it will be a real blessing. Think of the time I am wasting to-day. I would not have come for any one else; only for my mother and Anne. I wanted so much to be on the Great Marsh this afternoon."

"I want to go there; I must see Clarice's school. I

have not visited it since it was first commenced. She teaches the girls herself nearly every day; you cannot think how bright she is when she is talking about her favourite scholars. James, I am sure I see a little puff of steam."

"Is it not smoke from some cottage chimney?"

"As if I did not know steam from smoke! It is the train, I tell you. I hear the distant pad-pad of the engine. Oh, James!"

"Well, do not squeeze my hand to pieces. I declare you are nervous, Bertie, and you are pale too. I insist upon your recovering your good looks immediately, or they will think I have been ill-treating you ever since I brought you to Chalfonts. Yes, it is the train, sure enough there go the signals! What an excitable little thing you are, Bertie, dear; you are quite as bad as Hilda!"

But Bertie was too much absorbed to reply in her usual saucy style to her husband's rallying speech; she was eagerly watching the progress of the train, which was now slackening speed, and within a few yards of the platform. Another minute or so, and it had actually stopped, and Mr. and Mrs. James Musgrave were peering into all the first-class carriages, as they glided quickly by, for the train had rather overshot the station; and at first they really feared they were going to be disappointed, for no familiar faces could they see, and Bertie's look of mortification was so expressive that James was afraid strangers might be commenting on her evident ill-temper. But when the train really stopped only three passengers alighted, and two of them were certainly the mother and sister so anxiously expected. In another minute there was a general embrace, much to the edification of the station-master, no doubt, for he dropped Anne's bonnet-box, and stood contemplating the quartette and their demonstrations with open-mouthed, wide-staring interest.

"Now let me look at you, Anne," said Bertie, when the

station-master had been recalled to his senses, and the luggage arrangements concluded; "let me have a right good look. Dear me, how handsome you are, and surely you are taller!"

"Scarcely," said Anne, smiling; "and as for handsome, I am just what I used to be, only older, and perhaps a little stouter."

But truly Anne Musgrave had developed into a remarkably fine woman, and she brought back with her a distinguished air that perhaps gave one the illusion of an increase of stature. Her face was really beautiful, though not from regularity of feature, or from delicacy of tint, albeit the pure healthy colouring would have delighted any artist; but the impress of goodness, sweetness, and refinement, mingled with a certain strength, and something of repression, something which told of conflicts passed and triumphs won, made the beauty of that calm, bright countenance, which looked so abidingly, so entirely happy;—a countenance which showed no negative repose, no mere passive content, no weak yielding to the irresistible; but a perfect appreciation of all the joy and all the sorrow that had befallen, or that could yet befal!—a countenance showing traces of trial, of something that had once disturbed its sweet serenity, and dimmed its quiet radiance, something that had shaken to the very centre the foundations of its peace; and yet something more, which spoke of no vain struggle, no inglorious defeat, no vanquished resolutions, but of victory complete and grand—victory over sin and self, and even over the regret that might have been accounted simply natural. And yet it was no stoic's face that was looking so lovingly into Bertie's shining, brown eyes, no strong-minded, stern-spirited, philosophic face; only the face of one whose strength was in God, who through Him, and by Him, and in Him, had nobly borne a heavy burden till the appointed time of rest—had battled untiringly with the foe, and after fierce and weary strife had

won the victory! For even in this life there is rest after toil, and the sheaves of harvest may be gathered in, and the song of triumph, like that of Miriam on the Red Sea shore, may part the lips that erewhile had paled in mortal dread and bitterest anguish; though not till that other flood be crossed, and not till the heavenly gates are entered, will the rest be perfect, the harvest fully reaped, the triumph absolute. Only so much the good God gives to cheer us on our way, a pledge of the "Well done! good and faithful servant," that will be our welcome, when our work on earth is done.

Late in the evening, when the moonlight was flooding all the silvery sea, and casting soft shadows on the lonely fells, Bertie came into Anne's room, where she was unpacking some small matters of presents and keepsakes from abroad. The children were all in bed, and James and his mother were walking on the brow; Hilda had run down to the Rectory, so that Bertie was quite prepared for a cosy little chat with Anne. "All to ourselves," she said, as she sat down at the foot of the bed, while her sister finished emptying a trunk, containing various pretty things and curiosities, which mother and daughter had been accumulating during their long travels.

Naturally they spoke much of the different places visited, of the return journey, and of Mrs. Temple and Juliet, with whom Mrs. and Miss Musgrave had stayed several days as a rest, after a somewhat stormy crossing of the Channel. At length Bertie said, "And you are quite well again, Anne?"

"Quite well, thank you, dear, and quite strong, I believe; I never remember feeling better. It was on mamma's account we stayed in London; I could have come straight on at once, after a night's sleep. Oh, Bertie! it seems so strange, and yet so natural, to be in the dear, dear old place again! And then to see you here with James, and the children calling you mamma; when last

time I saw you, you were a bride, quite a slim young thing, wondering how you could possibly fulfil the onerous duties of wife and mistress! How fast time flies!"

"Yes! it seems but the other day since I came here with Amy and dear papa. Oh! how much sprang from that visit! I often laugh when I remember how I was cautioned against falling in love with James, and here I am, his wife, and the mother of his four children! Mamma is just beginning slowly to understand that I am not likely to repent."

"James has not disappointed you, Bertie?"

"Ah! you know he has not, Anne! You know one could not be disappointed in him; he is so thoroughly good, and wise, and kind, and so altogether considerate and unselfish. I do not tell him so; but really I did not half appreciate him when I married him. You know I am petulant, and impulsive, and sometimes I let my feelings carry me away; I have often tried his patience, and tested his forbearance, and he has never failed. Even you, his sister, cannot tell how thoroughly good he is. Anne, I sometimes wonder why God made me so happy! Look at this dear home! look at my precious husband and my darling children! What have I done that my cup should thus be filled to overflowing?"

Bertie spoke, as she often did, without reflection, immediately afterwards feeling provoked at her own lack of consideration; and now the words had scarcely left her lips, and her eyes were still glittering with grateful emotion, when it occurred to her how ungenerous it was thus to flourish her married happiness before Anne, who had drunk of a far different cup, who had had to lay down all sweet visions of wedded bliss, whose spirit must be even now stirred with memories of the past, as once more she moved in the familiar scenes where the great sorrow of her life had fallen upon her. But the calm, sweet face was unclouded; no shade of painful regret was darkening

the fair brow, and the soft eyes still beamed with a sort of radiant peacefulness, which had struck Bertie as being inexpressibly beautiful. Her next question was—"How is Clarice?"

"Pretty well again, but not strong, certainly; she has been more or less ailing ever since her little girl was born, two years ago. It was a pretty little thing, Anne, but from the first so delicate I knew it could not live. It came with the last roses of summer, and it went away with the first snowdrops. Poor Clarice! she clung so closely to her fragile little flower!"

"Do you think she is quite happy?"

"Not what I call happy, and yet happy enough, I suppose, as the world goes; few women are blessed as I am! But Clarice still wears the old weary look that I noticed the first day I saw her; she is very much faded, too; her beauty has never in any degree returned, and now I think she looks older than Gerard. He is very kind to her, and she loves him, I believe, more truly and deeply than in the first days of their marriage. Still, Anne, there is something in her face and in her tone that distresses one. And now, dear, let me ask you just this once—and I will not revert to the subject again—are *you* quite happy?"

"*Quite!* Do not I look so?"

"You do, indeed! And yet—I thought—a nature like yours could not forget, could not change! I thought you might be *content;* but happiness in its fullest, richest sense, I fancied you could never know again."

"It is possible, dear, to be happy, even when something is inexorably withheld. With God's peace in the soul, and *His* sunshine in the heart, and the fair world with all its brightness around, and always the hope of the bliss that is waiting to be revealed, one must be happy!"

"But tell me, Anne—I will not trouble you after to-night—was it not a great struggle to attain this peace?"

For an instant Anne's lips quivered, and a tinge of sadness was in her voice as, thinking of those days of anguish, she replied, "A terrible struggle, Bertie! it seemed for a while one long, lingering, ceaseless torture, that would end only when mortal life was over. It was so hard to give up, even in thought, the happiness that might have been—so difficult to entirely acquiesce and say, '*Thy will be done!*' My love had grown in those few months to be a part of myself; and when I was called to renounce it, it seemed like renouncing my own existence, and yet living on in a sort of death rather than in life."

"Anne, I wonder you could do it!"

"God called me to it, dear."

"I know; but one may be called to something too hard for one's strength."

"By man—yes! But never by God. He calls one to hard and painful duties sometimes, but always He gives needful strength. Bertie, of myself I had never won the day: I was wounded more deeply, more sorely, than any of you guessed, except perhaps by mother; and all the little strength I had was soon exhausted, and I should have sunk to the earth and perished had not One who knew all sorrow, all pain, all temptation, whispered me to trust still, and be of good cheer. It was His voice that spoke to me and consoled me; His hand that guided me; His face that shone upon me; His faithfulness that held me up, when I myself was faithless; and now He has brought me into pleasant pastures once more, and I am quite happy."

"You will always count Gerard your friend?"

"Always the dearest of friends! I am not ashamed to give him that name—I should be, if I had wavered long ago; and I am not afraid for God to look down into my heart of hearts, and see the love I now have for him whom I once loved far otherwise. It has been a great

joy to me, Bertie, to hear of his active, useful, honourable life, here among his own people."

"He once told me that, if you had lost faith and despaired in that dreadful trial, it would have been all over with him. He would have doubted again God's lovingkindness."

"I do not believe he would, though he may think so. But it was almost more for his sake than for my own that I tried to be strong. I was so afraid I should hinder him when he was seeking the right paths, and struggling for a noble fortitude. Ah! God helped us both; how good, and kind, and true He is!"

"And you really *are* quite happy?" said Bertie, once more, through her tears, "but I see, I feel you are!"

"Yes, for my soul is full of an infinite peace; my Father's face is shining on me; life is still before me with all its toils, and all its blessings too, and I am quite happy, Bertie, dear!"

CHAPTER XXXV.

ONCE MORE.

It was good to see Anne Musgrave once more in her own old home; good to see her moving about in the old familiar rooms among the children, who took wonderfully to the new auntie; good to see her as she cooed over the baby, and coaxed little Bertie, and let those sturdy young rebels, her nephews, climb upon her knees, and pull down her hair, and rumple her nice collars. Anne was twenty-eight now, but there was nothing of the "old maid" about her, though an old maid she had certainly resigned herself to be. She had had several excellent

offers abroad, two from countrymen of her own, and in one case her mother had urged her at least to contemplate proposals so advantageous, so honourable in every point of view. But Anne never wavered; she needed no time for deliberation, and, coquetry being no part of her nature, she would not, by a moment's hesitation, excite hopes never to be realised; so quietly, but decidedly, she dismissed the rich and well-born Englishman whose admiration she had won—rather to Mrs. Musgrave's disappointment, for, sensible and right-minded as she was, she could not take kindly to the notion of a spinster life for Anne.

"You know, mamma," Anne would say, "that you would be horrified at my making a mere marriage of expediency."

And Mrs. Musgrave would reply, "Certainly I should, my dear; but why in such a case should it be a mere affair of expediency or eligibility? I cannot see, my child, what there is to prevent you loving this most excellent and attractive man."

"Only, mamma, that I do *not* love him."

"There is so much in him to win your affectionate regards."

"I suppose I am cold-hearted, mamma; but really I cannot feel more than esteem and friendship for Mr. Derwent, and he is not the man to be content with so little. I should not myself if I were in his place; I should wish my wife to give me her very deepest, and strongest, and most abiding love."

"And you *cannot* give that, Anne, my dear?"

"No, mamma. I can never give that again, I think; I gave it once, and—and I had to take it back. It was not wasted, I know; it was all right, for it was God's ordering, and I am quite content with all that is, and all that has been, only I cannot begin afresh. *That* page of my life, mamma, was turned over, that last winter at dear

old Chalfonts; it can never be reopened, neither can another page of the same sort be written; I feel as if upon that part of my life's history God Himself had laid His finger, and it is sacred for evermore. I am quite willing to accept all that comes to me as a single woman; I only ask to be exclusively your child, to stay with you, best and sweetest of mothers, till God shall call one of us to our eternal home. I *cannot* now be any man's wife."

Mrs. Musgrave rose silently and kissed her daughter; they understood one another perfectly, these two who had grown into a sort of sisterhood without interfering with the holy ties of filial and maternal duty. It is ever so with mother and daughter when the relationship is what it ought to be—the daughter is ever the child, and the mother is ever the parent, deferred to and revered; but as years roll on, and in the child the woman's heart and soul is perfectly developed, there comes another bond of union—the bond of friendship and true mutual confidence, the intercourse and mutual sympathy which only two women who love each other verily and unselfishly can know.

And so Anne, notwithstanding her opportunities, came back to the Holt Farm unwedded and unaffianced; and her face was so serene, and so perfect a peace was shining in her sweet grey eyes, and there was something so gentle, so settled, and yet so dignified in her mien, that scarce could any one wish for another change to "come o'er the spirit of her dream." Only secretly Bertie fretted at Anne's unmated condition. Happy, most thoroughly so, in her own married life, it seemed to her that single blessedness must be very single indeed in its blessings, and remarkably plural in its needs and manifold shortcomings! Not for the world would she have remained Bertie Temple! To have missed James would have been to miss all the beauty and happiness of life; to have

missed the holy joys and duties of wifehood and motherhood would have been to endure a bare existence, a positive vegetation—a humdrum, negative, forced content—not to *live*, with all the powers of soul and mind called into joyous action, and expanding and increasing day by day! Ah, Bertie! you may toss back your crisp, dark curls, and smile out of the depths of your true woman's heart, as a happy wife and mother may and should; and you may exult over the treasures given to your keeping; but be not too wildly elate! God has been very good to you! you have your heart's desire; like the Shunamite of old, you dwell among your own—your best and dearest, your only loved ones. Thank God, happy Bertie—thank Him who has mingled for you this sweet, pure draught, and placed in your hands the overflowing cup; yes, let life be one long doxology! Let your lips ever swell the great thanksgiving hymn, "Praise God, from whom *all blessings flow.*"

For, Bertie, there are hundreds—nay, thousands—of your sister women with whom it is far otherwise. Some seem altogether to miss the fulness and richness of a human love; with some, the day is ever grey, and quiet, and cool; and if the shadows fall not mournfully, there is no glow, no brightness, in their paths. Some hear, for one brief hour, the exquisite music of a mutual love, and for the rest of a lifetime have to be satisfied with the echoes only of that long-past, unforgotten strain! And some *think* that Paradise is opened to them, and they enter in, and find not a bower of bliss, not vales and slopes of Eden, but an arid wilderness, a dusty, dull by-way, a present of bitter disappointment and a future of dismay! Yes; all these contingencies are in the world, and there are breaking hearts everywhere, and "hearts that break, yet brokenly live on;" and there are costly robes folded over secret pain, and jewels glittering on aching brows, and burdens to be borne in silent perpetuity; therefore

thank God heartily, all ye who walk in the sweet sunshine of pure home joys and perfect sympathies!

And thank Him, too, all ye who know only the level monotony and the grey, silent waste of a solitary life; for if, in the cold shadow, no plants of mortal love and heart-in-heart communion may grow, yet is the Tree of Life still blooming, and its healing fruits still ripening by the blissful waters; and the light that is neither of sun, or moon, or candle, is shining beyond the sad horizon of your earthly life.

> "What if the bread
> Be bitter in thine inn, and thou unshod
> To meet the flints? At least it may be said,
> Because the way is *short*, I thank Thee, God."

Also, it is wonderful how gradually the grey tints may flush into a warmer hue—how when the sky is heaviest and most overcast, the clouds may show a rift, and the blue streak gleam forth, and the mists rise and roll away, till sunshine is on the hills, and the flowers bud afresh, and the voice of song is heard again, where all was weary silence! God is so good, so kind, that there is always some sweetness in the bitter cup. Let us be content to drink the bitter medicine given us for our good; and when we lay down the chalice we shall find that we have drained a precious cordial, sweet to the taste as well as healing to the soul. Not only at Cana of Galilee did Christ turn water into wine; many a time since has He turned the common things of life, taken up in His name, and as simple duties, into richest benedictions! Many a time, at His command, has the wine of life unexpectedly gladdened the pale, fainting lips of those who, for His sake, have been content to taste no more exhilarating draught than that which the water-pots of stone presented. It is not His will that sorrow and joylessness should be the continuous portion of any of His children here on earth; much of suffering may be theirs—they may be long

and heavily chastened,—but ever and anon will spring up some radiant flowers among the thorns, and there will be experiences, though brief perhaps, of the green pastures, and the tranquil waters, and the pleasant shining of the summer sun! And then there is always the "exceeding and eternal weight of glory" that remains; the "passing away" not only of our sweetest, brightest, and most cherished things, but also of sorrow, and bereavement, and care! When the day is done, not only is its toil over, but its cares are past; and as one day glides away, be it in sunshine or in shade, so glides away another; and to-morrows come and go, and week after week wears on; and now it is the early spring, and now the golden harvest-time, and now the freezing winter; and so the years succeed each other, till some day the Lord says, "It is enough, my child—come *home!*" And then we find suddenly that the way has not been long or sad, after all; the week's work may have been heavy, but we were helped and guided; and now it is all done, and it is Saturday night, and we may lie down and close our weary eyes, and fold our tired hands, and rest thankfully in the safe, angel-guarded chamber of the tomb, till the night passes, and the morning comes, and we wake up in *His* likeness, and are "*satisfied!*"

Therefore, O tried and weary ones—

> "*Hope!* with all the strength thou usest
> In embracing thy despair.
> *Love!* the earthly love thou lovest
> Shall return to thee more fair.
> *Work!* make clear the forest tangles
> Of the wildest stranger-land.
> *Trust!* the blessed deathly angels
> Whisper, 'Sabbath hours at hand.'"

On the morning after Anne's return she went over the whole farm, and five years of James's model farming had made many changes there. There were new barns, new cow-houses, new everything, it seemed to Anne; but

Sally's old mansion was not replaced by a more modern structure—it was simply "restored." In this day of restorations, why not restore a cow-house if it happen to be part of an ancient refectory? And Sally herself, though now well stricken in years, still grazed among the herd, the patriarchess of them all; though, I am sorry to say, she did not recognise Anne when she put out her hand to fondle her, but made a feint of pushing at her with her horns, and mooed and moved away as if annoyed at the intrusion of a stranger.

"Sally has forgotten me," said Anne, almost sorrowfully; "and she loved me so when I was a child!"

"Sally's temper does not improve with her years," replied James. "She broke one of her horns a few Sundays ago fighting with Strawberry, Bertie's favourite new cow; but we bound it up and treated it with arnica, and I think it will serve her turn to the end, poor old cush!"

"But she is the cow with the crumplety horn, certainly," said Hilda. "I hope she will not further illustrate the old ballad by tossing some 'maiden all forlorn.'"

"We have no forlorn maidens here," replied Bertie, with that saucy toss of her curls, and that inimitable turn-up of her pug nose, which it always delighted James so much to see. "All my maidens are contented and happy, and if I see any one moping I call her to me, and ask what is the matter. If she has indigestion, I give her Nux; if she has a cold, I give her Mercurius or Aconite, as the case may be; if she has, oh, any of the ills that flesh is heir to, I give her the proper thing; but if she is stupid, I scold her well. Oh, I *can* scold, can't I, James? And if she has a sweetheart, I tell her to send him to me."

"Yes," interrupted James merrily, "that wife of mine has constituted herself a sort of oracle for all the rustic lovers in the neighbourhood. Every one of our maids has a *lover*."

"To be sure," retorted Bertie. "Won't the maids fall

in love as well as we? And had not they better be allowed to do it respectably and honourably? Mistresses are so unreasonable in this particular that the girls themselves get to fancy there is something wrong in an engagement, and so they tell fibs, and make assignations in the dark, and take a pleasure in cheating 'the missis,' and, as a consequence, they lose their own self-respect, and fail to secure the respect of their young man, and the result is—*mischief!*"

"There is one of the maids who is still *minus* a sweetheart," said Hilda. "Judy will have nothing to say to the nobler sex. She stigmatises all who pay their addresses to her as 'fellows.'"

"Ah! I forgot Judy. Well, there is no time lost. She is only eighteen, and if she can make up her mind to be prime minister in my kitchen for the next seven years it will be all the better for her. Judy has turned out a remarkably clean, useful servant, Anne; only she has a will of her own, and some very curious notions for a person in her station. I married off two of my maids in the spring; one was cook—not the cook you left here, but her younger sister—and Judy has taken her place, and is so successful that James declares we may have a dinner-party *à la Russe* to celebrate your return without fear of any serious disaster."

"You would astonish the neighbourhood."

"We should astonish ourselves very much, I believe. We go in for all possible comforts and refinements, and for some few luxuries, but not for grandeur. And a dinner *à la Russe*, in a house where grandeur is not indigenous, would turn out a very funny affair, I am afraid. Such an entertainment would be in character at the Holt, but not at Holt Farm, so I shall not set Judy to study 'Francatelli' just yet."

"Talking of the Holt, here are the Holt people," said Hilda. "Look, Bertie, through the trees, and you will see

Gerard and Clarice coming this way. Bless me, what a scrap of a woman Clarice is! I think she grows smaller every day."

"She grows thinner, I believe; she is a delicate little creature."

"Little women generally are weak," said Hilda, who was like a young giraffe. "And they are often as weak mentally as physically."

Bertie turned round upon her.

"What is that you say, Hilda? Little women are often most charming. If I were a man, I would marry a dear wee humming-bird of a woman, rather than a great creature who could light the street-lamps without a ladder. Please to remember that I can only just lay my head on James's shoulder. *I* don't aspire to be a fine woman."

"Well, I do," returned Hilda, tranquilly, "or, rather, I shall. I am not 'fine' now, I confess, being rather long than tall, and on the whole lean—and, not to put too fine a point on it, '*scraggy*.' Never mind, I shall fill up and fill out splendidly by-and-by, and be like a daughter of the gods,

'Divinely tall,
And most divinely fair.'"

"With a snub nose and a few freckles," quoth Bertie. "Hilda, my darling, you will be no handsomer than I am, only you will be bigger. But if you can only find a James."

"I ask nothing better, Bertie. But how many Jameses are there in the world? I should not like a Gerard, you know. No; not a bit of it. And I could not do with a Dr. Redmayne. No; nor even a Dr. Wilson. And as for a Captain Conyngham, my dear Bertie, I should expire before the honeymoon was at the full. And as for a creature like Georgy's husband—well, not being the gentlest of my sex, there is no knowing to what I might be impelled. Ah! here they come. Oh! Bertie, don't

you feel for Anne?—this is their first meeting since your wedding-day."

Bertie and Hilda, during this conversation, had been standing a little apart, under a fine corn-rick; James and Anne had gone on to meet the visitors. For answer, Bertie squeezed Hilda's hand and kissed her excitedly.

"My dear," she said, "I really felt too nervous to go on with them. It is all very well to feel resigned far away; it is so easy in absence to reduce one's feelings to obedience; but when the old intercourse is renewed, when the familiar tones and glances are once more before one, when one feels again the dear, familiar hand-clasp—that can never be *more* than a hand-clasp, Hilda—it must be very hard to bear. God grant that dear Anne may not have miscalculated her strength for this!"

Bertie need not have feared, for Anne's strength was *not her own*. After the lapse of years, once more she and Gerard Thurston stood face to face, and Clarice was between them. And her greeting to Gerard was cordial, frank, and almost sisterly. The hand-clasp which Bertie had dreaded was warm and close, but not prolonged; but Anne held in her arms the frail little figure that glided into her embrace as naturally as a child just hurt and startled nestles to its mother's arms.

A little while afterwards they were alone, sitting on the moor among the purple heather; the others had gone on towards the cliff.

"I am so glad you are come home, Anne," said Clarice, in her soft, sweet voice—there was still some remnant of her French accent, some faint reminiscences of the Madame Gerard of Tylney House; "I have wanted you so often, dear."

"Have you?" and Anne folded the slight form in her arms again; she never knew how it came to pass, but in a moment she felt that she loved inexpressibly Gerard Thurston's wife—loved her, too, with a sort of motherly

compassion, and elder-sisterly tenderness, that it was difficult to understand. No; the faded beauty of early years had never come back to Clarice. There was a certain transparency of complexion; but all the fresh tints were gone, the cheeks were hollow, the violet-blue eyes sweet, but sad and lustreless; the features were pinched and shrunken, and the still plentiful *blonde-cendrée* hair was touched and streaked with grey. Time had laid his hand heavily on Mrs. Thurston, who was only ten years older than Anne; for Clarice at eight-and-thirty looked older than Mrs. Musgrave, while Gerard was one of those men who look old in youth, one of those who at five-and-twenty might be forty, or any age indeed, but who, having reached as it were a certain point, stand still, and look no older as year after year rolls on its way. Anne thought Gerard was nearly the same as when she first saw him with Lyulph on the threshold of his home; and Lyulph, too, was unchanged, though he was much quieter than of yore, and he lay at Anne's feet, snuffing her garments in a calm delight, and poking his great cold nose into her hand whenever she seemed so much absorbed in his mistress as to forget his presence. But Clarice was painfully aged and worn, and the question arose, after all, had she been happy? Poor little thing! There was something in Anne's fine figure, and bright, earnest eyes, and clear, soft tones, that gave her a sense of protection. She was always so tired, she said; but she was happy. Oh, yes! Anne was not to think she was anything but happy, for Gerard was very kind and good, and so gentle with her; but she did not understand him—she supposed now she never could. If only her baby had lived, the little girl that came to her at Canonbury Holt, there would have been perfect comprehension between the mother and the child! And Clarice melted into tears, and wept on Anne's shoulder, as though her heart was breaking.

"You must be like the lady in 'In Memoriam,'" said

Anne soothingly; "there is many a wife, I suppose, who must be content with 'I cannot understand—I love!'"

"Oh, I am content! Still, I wish he did not live so constantly in regions into which I cannot penetrate. Sometimes, as we sit side by side, I think the whole universe might be between us. His heart and mine are so differently constituted."

"Is it not more a question of mind and temperament than of heart?" asked Anne.

"Perhaps it is; but I know I feel very lonely, especially since my baby left me. Even in the old days I never was more lonely, I think, than now, with my husband so near and yet so far. If he would not shut himself up in the library so much!"

"Is that your grievance?" said Anne, with a smile. "I should say he always did like shutting himself up with books and Lyulph. Well, you have your school on the marsh, and your poor people, and your reading also. You used to be very fond of books yourself. Seriously, Clarice, the most loving of husbands need not be at his wife's elbow the live-long day. Bertie says she seldom sees James more than once in the day, and not always that; if he goes to any distance he does not return to dinner."

"Ah, but Bertie has her little ones, and she is such a busy housewife."

This was true enough, and before Anne had thought of a suitable rejoinder the rest of the party came up, and the subject of discourse was changed.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

AN INVASION.

ANNE soon fell into all her old ways—her old ways, at least, out of doors; for indoors they were new ones she adopted, playing with the children, tossing the baby, and teaching Master Jamie his letters, while she left, of course, to Bertie all the small household matters to which she had once herself attended. It was settled that Mrs. Musgrave and her daughter should remain at the Farm till the spring, then they were to be installed at Rose Cottage; and in the meantime Anne visited all her old friends at Cockleham, had long talks with the cocklers and their wives, went down upon the marsh to see the "works," and took much interest in the new railway that was now complete, so far as the embankment went, nearly to Grangeside. "Only this winter to be safely tided over," said James in triumph, "and then the railway shuts us in with an impregnable sea-wall! Look along that moss, Anne; did you ever see finer crops?"

"I think not. Oh! James, it is good to see an English landscape again, especially a Fellshire landscape."

"Do you not miss the vines, and the olives, and the brilliant atmosphere, and all the rest of it?"

"No! They were all very well in their way, beautiful exceedingly; but I *love* this tender, soft colouring of our own bonnie north country. What can be finer than that blue-grey mist upon the Thurston Fells, or that purple glow far away beyond Foudrey Pile? No! I am very glad to have seen it all, and to have dwelt so long in foreign lands, and to keep pleasant memories that will abide with me while I live; but I do not admire the sunny skies and orange groves of Italy to the prejudice of my own paler

atmosphere. Like dear old Wordsworth, I love the mists that spiritualise our mountains. I cannot tell you how fair was the blue Mediterranean, but I love far better that shining, tossing sea out yonder, and those turbid Channel waves with all their wild, bleak power; and those peaks and crags, they are dearer to me than all the wondrous Alpine heights; and as for the old Priory-church, I have seen nothing that I care for half as much since I went away."

"Not the Rouen churches, about which my mother is actually raving?"

"Ah! the Rouen churches were certainly the crowning point! Not even Cologne Cathedral—I never could get up the proper amount of veneration for St. Peter's; I suppose I did not stay long enough, they told me it would grow upon me!—not even Cologne was to me what St. Ouen was. But I must not begin to talk about it, or, like mamma, I shall begin to rave. Only St. Ouen is like a glorious dream—a sort of realisation of some impossible ideal, while the Priory-church is my own, a reality that I may clasp, so to speak, and hallowed to me by a thousand sweet and sacred associations. No! I am not come back to undervalue my own fair England—England the free, the proud, the beloved! There is only one thing I do miss, and that is the flowers."

"Yes; I suppose we cannot compete with a warm climate in that particular."

"No, indeed. Oh, the flower-markets abroad! How foreigners must laugh at our Covent Garden display! But the wild flowers alone are a joy and a wonder: I shall never forget Nice and Mentone. Oh! the lemon-groves, their pale, tender foliage blending with the grey olives; the feathery maiden-hair and the trailing lycopodiums, the tangled growth of myrtles and rosemaries, and wild roses and arbutus. And as for the violets, there they were of every shade of purple, from nearly black to palest lilac, and

they bent over the streams and clung about the gnarled, split trunks of the hoary, ancient olives, and spread under your feet a carpet more beautiful than any looms of Aubusson could furnish! Besides, there were purple and scarlet anemones, many-coloured hyacinths, rosy gladioli, snowy arums, golden cytisus, and everywhere such wealth of trailing ferns and mosses, mantling vines, and fragrant orange blooms. For flowers I saw nothing like Mentone, San Remo, Monaco, and the whole beautiful Cornice. I have brought home quite a collection of slips and seeds and roots, and Clarice is going to see what she can do with them till I have a greenhouse at Rose Cottage."

"Clarice is very fond of gardening; she is always busy among her flower-beds or in her conservatory. When he is at home Thurston seems to live in his library."

"He does not neglect her, James?"

"I should be very sorry to say he did; and yet, Anne, I am sure that Bertie would think I neglected her if I gave her no more of my society than Thurston gives his wife. And I should want to see my Bertie's sunshiny face if she did not want to see mine, and that is fact. But then Thurston and I are very different, though there are some affinities between us, and we are fast friends: yet I fancy those two, Gerard and Clarice, do not understand each other as perfectly as husband and wife should do if they want to be happy. Poor loving little Clarice, what an impulsive child it is sometimes; and Gerard, so grave and cold—well, *cool*, perhaps. Anne, my dear, I verily believe she would no more dare go up and give him a kiss unasked, than you would dare to go up and pat Mr. Taurus yonder, who is a dangerous customer, I must allow, though a splendid animal."

Anne looked distressed, but she did not speak. She was saved from any necessity of reply by her brother darting forward, and exclaiming, "Ah! here is the post-

man. Now then, Anne, are you expecting any letters from Chamouni, or Martigny, or Tête-noire?"

James came back with half-a-dozen letters in his hand—four for himself on business matters, one for Bertie, and one for Judy. They had been talking all this while on that bit of moor which the lane in front of the farm traversed, and now they hastened indoors, James reading his despatches as he went. They were brief enough, for he had finished them all, torn up two, and consigned the other two to his pocket-book, before they reached "the parlour," as it was still called, where Mrs. Musgrave was busy mending stockings and socks, and Bertie was nursing her baby, and chattering with little Bertie and "the boys," who were all rollicking on the hearthrug at her feet.

"Something for you, my dear," said her husband, putting the letter into her disengaged hand. "Jamie, my lad, take that to Judy. Regy, keep quiet while mamma reads her letter. It seems to me, my love, that it is Amy's handwriting, only the postmark is Ambleside."

"It is Amy's writing, undoubtedly; she makes such a whiffey tail to her *g*."

"Is she, then, at Ambleside?"

"Hush! let me read. Keep quiet, there's a darling. O—h! J—ames!"

"My pet, what is the matter?"

"Amy is coming here—coming the day after to-morrow."

"You don't say so!"

"I do, because it is a fact. She is coming with Captain Conyngham, and Adeline, and the nurse, and a maid, and a man!"

"Heaven preserve us!" ejaculated Mr. Musgrave. "*Adeline*, too?"

"Ah! and Georgy too. Georgy's husband has gone to the uttermost parts of the earth, apparently, and Georgy

is spending the summer with Amy. Oh, my dear James, what *shall* we do with them?"

"What shall we do with that horrible little Adeline, a child that screams with fury, and dances about the floor in her rage? She will corrupt our children, Bertie! Let us send them away, as we should do if scarlet fever or diphtheria were coming into the house."

"We can hardly do that, my dear."

"I wonder if Clarice——. Jamie, my lad, mamma and I want to talk; take Regy and Bertie into the nursery, please. There! now we can say what we will. It is not well speaking freely before children. It does them harm to bid them keep anything secret, and if they get into a talkative, confidential strain, there is no knowing what horrible *contretemps* may ensue. Bertie, what is to be done?"

"Of course, Amy and Amy's husband and their suite must come. I cannot refuse my own sister."

"Certainly not. But what on earth brings them here among the barbarians?"

"Read for yourself, my dear—read aloud, that mother and Anne may hear. Ah! and here comes Hilda to be electrified. Listen, sister mine! Amy is about to vouchsafe to us the light of her countenance."

James read:—

"My Dear Bertie,—As you see, we are at Ambleside. We have been to Keswick and to the Grasmere Hotel, and of course you will understand we are doing the Lakes. Unluckily, measles have—or is it *has?* I am sure I don't know whether measles is singular or plural—but measles are in the house, and they, or *it*, are, or *is*, very bad in the place, and I am afraid for Adeline. And what is more, Alfred cannot remember that he ever had the measles, and he is afraid of them too. I *have* had them, I know, as you will recollect, as you almost died of them at the same

time, and so did Hilda; but I think one might take them a second time, and die of them. At any rate, it is wicked to tempt Providence; and as our own house in town is half pulled to pieces, and will not be ready for us before October, and as we are tired of going about, and Alfred has heard that your scenery is very fine—quite as fine, in its way, as the tourists' parts—we have made up our minds to come to you, as I know the Holt Farm is capacious enough, and we shall not expect town luxuries, but make the best of everything, and put up with little inconveniences, which it is always well to do when you cannot remedy them. Georgy is staying with me; her husband is gone to some place I can't remember the name of, nor whether it is in China, or Central Africa, or Mexico. Of course we bring Adeline and her nurse, and I bring my French maid, and Alfred his man; and I dare say we shall do very well, so do not put yourself about. As I said, we are quite inclined to make the best of rustic life. With love,

"Your affectionate sister,

"AMY BEATRICE CONYNGHAM."

James groaned as he folded up the pink and scented epistle into its pink and scented and crested envelope, and handed it to his wife.

"Sweetly condescending, I must say," he grumbled; "she will make the best of the barbarians for her own convenience, and give them the measles in return."

"The boys have had measles, and I am not afraid for Bertie and baby at this time of the year; they must have measles some time, I suppose; and now, while they are in robust health, and while the weather is warm and dry, and yet not too hot, is as good a time as any. Besides, Adeline is quite well, and I dare say the panic of infection is founded on an isolated case or two. And the day after to-morrow?"

"Yes; that is what the postscript says; and we are to send several carriages to Farleton. I wonder how long they mean to stay. It is the end of August now. Suppose they should think of remaining till the end of October, what should we do with them, Bertie?"

"Oh! they will not stay so long; Amy will be off to some fashionable watering-place long before October sets in. And then, my dear, we have mother to help us manage, and Anne to make talk to Amy and Alfred. Oh! we shall do very well."

"We will do our best, certainly. Is there time to answer Amy's letter?"

"Let me see. No; this was written yesterday; and even if I wrote in time for to-day's post, it would scarcely reach them before they set out from Ambleside. We must just send to Farleton, and be in readiness to receive them."

But it took all the energies of the household to get things in readiness for their fashionable visitors at so short a notice; and Anne, Bertie, and Mrs. Musgrave, and all the servants, were hard at work from a little after sunrise next morning till five o'clock, when, according to "Bradshaw" and certain calculations of well-known distances, the travellers might be expected. There was what Bertie considered "*a late dinner*" in honour of their arrival, the children, of course, having dined in the middle of the day.

About half-past five the carriages drew up, and for a quarter of an hour there was a clatter of tongues that might have vied with that of Babel. Amy was stouter than of old—indeed, she was very much stouter than she cared to be; for she was conscious of being no longer "*petite*," but *stumpy*—not "a humming-bird of a woman," as Bertie said, but something that promised to become, save for fairness of complexion, a tolerable Hottentot Venus! Mrs. Temple had conserved her sylph-like figure even under the character of "grandmamma;" but Amy

had degenerated early into confirmed obesity, and threatened to be as broad almost as she was long! Woe to little women when their dimensions of breadth become irrepressible!

And, as if to make the whole thing more ridiculous, Captain Alfred Conyngham was thin to attenuation—so thin as to excite Bertie's compassion, and to determine her to order plenty of strong beef-tea to be made for his consumption.

"Amy had turned into a roly-poly," Hilda declared; "and Alfred into a spider; and it was doubtful whether any South Sea Islander would think him worth the trouble of slaughtering, he had so little meat upon his bones!"

Georgy was still fairy-like and pretty, but evidently superlatively silly, and, horror of horrors! as Bertie quickly discovered, matrimony had not cured her of falling in love with every Adonis who came in her way. It was an innocent sort of way of falling in love, certainly, and sometimes she was in love with several charming young men all at once. But her husband, Mr. Flutterwill, did not like it, and could not bring himself to like it, and he had the bad taste and illiberality to make remarks extremely personal and disagreeable, and, finally, he went off in a huff—Georgy was not quite sure where—only he took passage in an Oriental steamer, and she was left to flirt and fall in love to her silly heart's content. Only the men were shy of her now, she said; she was neither maid, wife, nor widow, and, on the whole, it was extremely stupid, and she wished Percy would come back again. But Percival Flutterwill was very happy somewhere among the Himalayas, collecting specimens of plants, and he was in no hurry to come back again to foolish, exasperating little Georgy, who had her novels and her white hands to cherish, and her relays of beaux, black, brown, and fair, married and single, young and old, well born and *parvenu*, and did not want *him*.

But Georgy did want him, for she had just found out that English society is rather particular on some points, and that it does not approve of pretty young women going about and flirting without stint, while their husbands are a few thousand miles away. And people were ill-natured enough to declare that "Mr. and Mrs. Flutterwill were really 'separated' by mutual understanding, and that Mr. Flutterwill really was not to blame," &c. And so, sometimes, Georgy found that "society," the female portion of it at least, gave her the cold shoulder, and even Amy, when out of temper, said very nasty things.

"And I do want him to come back," sobbed Georgy, making gushing confidences to Bertie while she was dressing for dinner. "Not that I want *him*, you understand; I never cared much about *him*, but it is awkward. I find it is horrible to be married, and yet have no husband to show to the world."

"You did not care much for him? Why, then, did you marry him, Georgy?"

"He had such a straight nose, and such a lovely beard."

"It was a pity to marry a nose and a beard only. I should have bargained for heart and brains in conjunction with them."

"Ah!" sighed Georgy. "*Heart*, my dear! who has heart now-a-days?"

Bertie laughed. "You will find plenty of 'heart' here, Georgy. We are not fashionable people, or sentimental people; but we love each other truly and rationally, and we are happy; so you have come to Chalfonts to see something out of the common way."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

MISS ADELINE.

WHEN dinner was announced, it was discovered that Miss Adeline absolutely refused the society of her cousins in the nursery. She was neither to be coaxed, nor threatened, nor entreated. She had resolved to make one of the grown-up dinner party, and of course she had her will.

"Dear me," said Amy, as she seated herself at table; "I thought you would have tea ready for us. I know the Holt Farm hours of old, you know."

"Yes," returned Bertie, good-humouredly; "but we thought, as you were accustomed to a late dinner, we would ourselves conform to fashionable usage. James fancied it might not be agreeable to you to dine in the middle of the day."

"A late dinner!" exclaimed Amy, half lifting her plump white hands, all sparkling with costly rings. She was certainly less remarkable for "repose" than she had been as Miss Temple; she had a manner of demonstration occasionally that was very trying to many people's nerves. "Do you call this a *late dinner*, and it is only just six o'clock?"

"It is late for us, who dine regularly at one or half-past, and never later than two o'clock."

Amy looked as if such utter savagery were too much for her to contemplate. She dropped her fork, and languidly remarked that there was nothing she disliked so much as half-and-half measures—mere compromises, so to speak. Dinner in the middle of the day was essentially vulgar, of course; but then it might suit people who lived out of the world, people who had absolutely no place in society;

but eight, or half-past eight was *the* hour for civilised society. Certainly, it ought to be one thing or the other—really early or really late; six o'clock was a simple absurdity.

"I am very sorry," said Bertie, her cheeks glowing. She was half inclined to say something very pungent, only a look from her husband silenced her, and she concluded with: "We quite meant to study your convenience. To-morrow you shall dine at whatever hour you please; if you select *eight*, it will serve for our supper."

"Pway, Mithith Muthgrave," interposed Captain Conyngham, "don't let uth dewange any of your plans; it is vewy kind of you to take uth in at thuth short notith, vewy kind indeed. I atthure you I feel it tho." The young man was good-natured, and he had some idea of good manners, and he was really vexed at his wife's want of breeding.

In the meantime a loud cry arose from Miss Adeline. She had been overlooked, a state of things entirely new in her experience, and against which she hastened to protest in her own peculiar fashion.

"My darling, what is it?" inquired Mrs. Conyngham. "I dare say," turning to Georgy, "the journey has fatigued her; she is so delicate. Alfred, why don't you see what it is she wants?"

Alfred, thus appealed to, stooped down and whispered certain inquiries in his daughter's ear; but the young lady refused to reply for some minutes, though at last, after being petted and soothed a little by her papa, she roared out: "I want my dinner, I will have some dinner."

"She is so sensitive," remarked Amy; "she feels anything like neglect so acutely. We were talking and forgot her."

"No, indeed," replied Bertie, "I did not forget the child, only I was attending to my grown-up guests first. What can I give her? This is very nice lamb!"

"Would you like some lamb, my dear?" inquired Amy of Miss Adeline, who, having ceased to cry, was now rubbing her eyes vigorously as if she meant to put them out with her knuckles, and under cover of this occupation was quietly inspecting all the dishes on the table.

"No, I won't have any lamb," she presently replied.

"What will you have?" inquired her unwise papa.

"Some of *that*," responded Adeline, reaching across the table, and making a general upset.

Oh, how Bertie's fingers tingled to reach her! In spite of asseverations that children ought not to be whipped, I think Adeline would have had but a poor chance just then, had she been at her aunt's disposal. Amy did not seem in the least discomposed, though there was a lake of fish-sauce on the clean table-cloth, and a river of salad-oil running into Hilda's lap. "Some of that" was a spicy compound of grouse, and mushroom, and curry, excellent no doubt for papas and mammas, but quite out of the question for little girls, at least it seemed so to Bertie, who would as soon have given her children brandy-punch or Indian pickles. To the infinite astonishment of the Musgraves, Captain Conyngham began helping the child to the unwholesome dish. "Oh!" Bertie could not help saying, "do not let her have it. I scarcely dare touch it myself; it is only fit for you gentlemen. Let her have some chicken," and Bertie pointed to a plump couple of young fowls, of course of her own rearing and feeding, and most delicately roasted.

"No!" interposed Miss Adeline; "I'll have that first; give it me—I will have it."

"Have thome thicken, my pet," pleaded papa; "this thicken ith tho nice, Addie!"

"I'll have thicken afterwards!" was Addie's response. She inherited her papa's lisp a little.

"For goodness' sake, Alfred, give her what she wants," interposed Amy; "if you don't she will begin to scream,

and I should not like her to go into one of her rages on an empty stomach."

Thus adjured, Alfred helped the young lady to curried grouse, to which she insisted on adding a rich fish-sauce and peas. The curry, however, was hotter than she expected; and in a few minutes the plate was dashed away, the knife and fork fled in opposite directions, and Adeline was in a tantrum! It took some time to soothe her, and both Amy and Alfred had to forsake their dinner in order to quiet the little termagant, who first of all dashed at everything within reach, and then, wriggling down from her chair, began to dance about like a wild Indian, or, as Hilda declared, like a young bear learning to perform on a heated floor.

"Shall I ring for the nurse to take her away?" said Bertie at length, her patience being quite exhausted.

"Oh dear *no!*" replied Amy, reproachfully; "nurse has no control over her; she would scream herself into fits; besides, she must have her dinner—she has had nothing since breakfast but a little Ormskirk gingerbread and some fruit."

"She has eaten gingerbread enough for seven children," remarked Georgy, who was placidly dining all through the tumult. "James, I'll thank you for one of those patties."

Now Adeline thought she would like a patty too; so she ceased shrieking, and came and climbed into her chair again, and had a patty, and then a bit of chicken, and then some pigeon-pie, the rich crust of which seemed marvellously to please her; and then some fruit-tart, and then some lemon-pudding, and then some cheese, and then some cream-cheese, and then some plums; and then she had part of a glass of sherry and several sips of Moselle — and Miss Conyngham's dinner was *un fait accompli!*

That night the young lady went to bed without making more resistance than is usual with ill-trained children;

but next day Bertie's troubles began. The nursery was a scene of warfare from morning till night; the little Musgraves—the elder ones at least—were struck dumb with astonishment; but wee Bertie was first frightened, and then inclined to resent the tyranny of her cousin; and the Holt Farm nurse took the part of her own charge, and the Conyngham nurse the part of Adeline; and dire was the contention, and fierce the contest, where uninterrupted peace had reigned before. In horror and amaze at all that was going on, Bertie fled to Clarice, and begged her to take little Bertie out of the tumult; and Clarice willingly acceded, and carried off the child to the Holt, very much to Amy's displeasure, for she had a pretty strong notion of the reasons why the little girl was sent away.

Clarice acted her part, and came and asked for her, certainly; but Amy knew quite well that it was a planned thing between the two ladies, and she resented it accordingly. The baby might be disturbed, but she was too young to be contaminated; and as for the little boys—well! it was to be hoped they would take warning from the frightful example, and perceive the propriety of curbing their tempers betimes.

As for the servants, they quarrelled with the Conyngham servants, and reports of an actual affray in the kitchen got abroad, and gave Chalfonts something to talk about. Mrs. Musgrave followed little Bertie to the Holt, because, as she said, she could not bear to sit still and see a child ruined without interference, and interference she knew would do no good, and only complicate the troubles of the household.

Was it really the same pleasant household as it was before the invasion of the enemy? Anne often asked herself. There was no longer any peace, any comfort, any rational conversation. Bertie was really getting ill-tempered herself, and snapped at James, to his infinite

astonishment, though she kissed him and begged pardon the next minute. Hilda went off to the rectory as frequently as possible; Anne remained to sustain Bertie's sinking energies, and to amuse Georgy, who required to be incessantly talked to, and to have some one at hand to whom she might pour out the story of her matrimonial wrongs. If the day began in tranquillity, it always ended in storms; if there were smiles in the forenoon, there were certainly shrieks in the afternoon, and, as Hilda remarked, "such strong language for infantile lips." At last, nobody heeded Adeline when she danced about the room, her eyes sparkling and her cheeks crimson with wild fury. She would never let any one touch her while she performed her *tarantella*, and so it was thought best to leave her quite to herself; only one day, as she was madly gyrating about the room, because she wanted something —a china mug, I believe—which Bertie would not let her have, because it had been James's in his childhood, and would not accept any compromise, she became giddy and fell upon the fender, and seriously cut her face and head.

Loud were Amy's lamentations, but for once Adeline was quiet. The truth was she was stunned, and exhausted with her passion, and she became really ill, and Dr. Wilson had to be called in. The wound was no trifling one, as he apprehended fever, and, of course, it was all but impossible to deal with so restive a patient. Now appeared the results of the parents' weakness; it was useless to reason with such a mite, and as for "suasion," about which Amy had descanted very largely to her sister, it failed entirely when it came to a question of medicine being taken, or not taken. There was nothing left for it but main force, and Miss Adeline had to be *drenched*, to the horror of the Musgraves, and the great grief and secret shame of Mrs. Conyngham. Bertie besought Amy to try homœopathy, and Amy consented, because she really did

not know what else to do; and even Dr. Wilson laughed and said, "It would be as well to try it, for the excitement caused by the drenching system did more harm than the medicine could do good."

The child at last began to rally, but for days she was shut up in her mother's bedroom, with her mother, and the French maid, and the unfortunate nurse, who gave notice to leave so soon as the family returned to town. Amy never could keep her nursemaids; neither high wages, nor perquisites, nor the permitted attention of policemen and soldiers, could bribe them to remain; and the Musgrave household did not wonder at it.

It was now September, and Amy was talking of Scarborough, to the intense relief of her tired-out host and hostess, who longed for the peace of other days, and wanted their own little Bertie back again.

James, too, was dreadfully bored with his brother-in-law. Alfred liked to go down to the works, and lisp out foolish remarks to the men, and ask ridiculous questions, that made him quite a laughing-stock. Sometimes James was fairly out of patience, and once, when Alfred, having contemplated the dykes and the breakwater, said, "What fun it would be, Muthgrave, if the thea weally did bweak in!" James did not see the "fun." It would involve the loss of so many thousands of pounds, and perhaps the loss of human life; for the waters, if they did break in, being now confined for space, would certainly extend no one could say where, and carry all before them. So Mr. Musgrave answered with less than his usual amiability, and yet in a joking tone,—

"If the sea does surprise us, Conyngham, I hope you will be here to share the fright and peril. We are going to have tremendous tides next week, and the glasses threaten storm; so you may come in for your *fun*, perhaps!"

How many a true word is said in jest! Before that time next week Alfred Conyngham had learnt that an inundation of the sea is not exactly *fun!*

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

CLARICE TELLS HER TROUBLES.

"How glad I am to see you!" said Clarice to Anne, who had walked across the Chase to spend the evening with her friend. "Gerard is away at St. Ulpha's, and I am quite alone; for Mrs. Musgrave is gone to the Rectory, and little Bertie is tired with her long stroll in the open air, and has fallen asleep early. How is great Bertie?"

"As well as can be expected under the present dispensation, which, however, is coming to an end, I am glad to say. Amy and the Captain leave us next week."

"I am glad that you should all be at peace again, but I shall be very sorry to lose my little Bertie. That child has been such a comfort to me, Anne."

"She is a dear little creature, and so intelligent for her age! And I never knew a child of two years and nine months give so little trouble. Bertie is an admirable mother."

"Yes; for her children, though trained to implicit obedience from their earliest infancy, are always happy, and rejoice to be with her. If my darling had lived I should have taken many a lesson out of her book. I often wonder how Bertie manages."

"She does not seem to *manage* at all. Her children know their mother's word is law; and they know, too,

that she is always kind and just. They are taught what '*no*' means when they are very little; they are never permitted to clamour or to worry for what they want. If they make a request which can be granted, it is granted cheerfully and at once; but if they make one which may not be accorded, a single negative is sufficient. Then, again, nothing is ever given to them that they cry and scream for—that is a standing rule."

"I hope Amy may be improved by her visit."

"I am afraid Mrs. Conyngham is not in a condition to improve. She has not an idea that she needs improvement. Indeed, she is rather bent on improving Bertie, whom she persists in pitying and speaking of as *sacrificed!*"

"Very much to Bertie's indignation, I am sure."

"Exactly; for, as you know, Bertie thinks herself the happiest and one of the most fortunate of women."

"Bertie is enviably happily, certainly," replied Clarice, with a something in her voice that Anne did not like. She went on, with the same doubtful inflection in her tone, "Yes, she is so happy, so thoroughly content, that sometimes I cannot bear to see her. Do not mistake. I am not such an utter wretch as to wish away one iota of her sweet, pure, exceeding happiness; but there are days when I had rather not witness it—when the contrast is too painful!"

"Why make the contrast, Clarice? In the first place, you and Bertie have very dissimilar temperaments, and your conditions are entirely different."

"I wish my condition were anything but what it is. I wish we were poor. I wish we had to work for our bread. I should like to make Gerard's shirts, and mend his socks, and cook his dinner."

"Including the Indian dishes, which Mr. Swingleswairy alone can achieve?" asked Anne, laughingly.

"Do not laugh at me," implored Clarice; and the wist-

ful look in the sad blue eyes effectually checked Anne's merriment.

"No, dear, I am not laughing at you; only I think you are quarrelling with your bread-and-butter because it is not buttered on both sides, which, metaphorically speaking, human bread-and-butter never is. Take my advice, dear; look on the buttered side, and do not turn it over, like a naughty, discontented child."

"I fear I am a very discontented child, Anne. I am ashamed of myself often, and often I think I will start afresh, and take things differently. I am shocked at my own thankless spirit, and I resolve that I will waste no more time in vain regrets and foolish wayward fancies, and I pray for strength; but somehow it is all useless. I find myself in a short time exactly where I was before."

"But, Clarice, forgive me! I cannot quite see what you have to tempt you to discontent. It seems to me that God has given you many blessings, that your way is in pleasant paths, that you have nearly all that heart can desire."

"Anne, have patience with me. I have so longed to speak to you, to tell you all that disquiets me. I thought you would understand me."

"I will try."

"It is the distance between myself and my husband that gives me so much unhappiness. Ever since he brought me to the Holt I have felt how far apart we are, how isolated I am, though in the eyes of the world we two walk together side by side."

"But, Clarice, Gerard is kind to you?"

"He is kindness itself; but oh! Anne, a wife wants something more than kindness; she wants to understand her husband, to share his secret thoughts; she wants to comprehend, and to be comprehended; she wants to reign without a rival in his heart."

"You have no rival, Clarice," said Anne, gravely.

This conversation seemed drifting into troublous currents. Anne did not wish to repel her friend, but there were some points on which she had no mind to receive her confidences; and it pained her to think that, after all, it was not well with Clarice and Gerard.

"You do not know, Anne, but I will tell you."

"Hush, Clarice! it does not become you to speak, or me to listen to, such revelations. Only let me beg you not to make yourself miserable over mere fancies. Unless I had indubitable evidence, I could not believe that Gerard was unworthy his wife's best love and confidence."

"Unworthy!—my husband unworthy! Oh, no, it is I who am the unworthy one! The rivals I speak of are his books and Lyulph. He shuts himself in his library with that dog whenever he is at home. If I ask him to spend an hour with me he comes; but I can see he comes only to please me, and he sits and talks about the news, or the weather, or my school, but all the while his soul is far away, in realms of which I know absolutely nothing."

"Clarice, I fancy this is true of many men besides Mr. Thurston. A woman should understand her husband so far as to divine his wishes, and to sympathise with him in all his expressed, and even some of his unexpressed, hopes and fears; and what in the main interests him should interest her; but there are some minds, some masculine minds, whose heights women can never fully reach, and whose depths she can never fathom. Let her be content to know more than any other creature, and to leave the rest, if so it must be. Clarice, I am not quite certain that there is such a thing as a perfect sympathy on earth. As Keble says,—

> 'Not even the tenderest heart, and next our own,
> Knows half the reasons while we smile and sigh.'

It cannot be in this world, Clarice! There are strong and deep affinities, thank God! and there are some twin souls

that seem to shadow forth each other, like mirror answering to mirror; there are kindred hearts as well as kindred ties, and consanguinities of mind as there are of body; but there is no such perfect union of spirit as to involve a perfect and never-failing comprehension. God only can know *all* our bitterness and *all* our joys."

"My greatest bitterness is, Anne, that I feel, I know, I have never *satisfied* my husband. He wants a nobler woman than I am. He would pour out his soul to you where he would be silent to me."

"Hush, Clarice! you must not say so."

"But I do say so, because it is true. I love him, oh! God knows how dearly! He is my world, my all below the skies, and I—I am a child to him, and sometimes he treats me like one. Only last night, when I asked him to go with me to-day to Garth Bridge, he went on with his writing, and, without looking up, said, 'No, child, no; I must go elsewhere to-morrow!'"

"James often calls Bertie '*child!*' I see no grievance in that; it is rather a term of endearment. Clarice dear, do not make troubles for yourself. Do you not think you are the least bit *exigeante?*"

"I do not mean to be; but I cannot bear that grave imperturbability, that quiet reticence, that cold, undemonstrative bearing. I often think I could take harsh words, and even hard usage, better than this icy kindness which freezes all my nature. I would rather have positive unkindness now and then, if between times I might be petted and caressed. If he would just take me to his heart sometimes I would never complain of occasional inequalities of temper, or of hasty words."

"You do not know, Clarice. It is so easy to fancy we could bear better other burdens than those which it has pleased God to lay upon us. And you must consider that there are divers kinds of temperaments among men and women. A man may love very deeply without giving

much expression to his affections. There are some natures that never seem fully to reveal themselves, unless they are roused by imminent peril, or something that for the moment makes them overleap the life-long barriers of reserve and taciturnity; and these natures are often the truest and the most faithful—ay, even in their outward impassiveness, the most tender, the most entirely to be trusted. And when one can *trust*, Clarice, one can afford to do without a great deal of fondling and petting; one can dispense with some little attentions; one does not mind what, to the external world, may seem like incongruities. Really, as you have consulted me, I must say, what otherwise I should not have presumed to say, that you are needlessly making yourself unhappy. I do not think any of us can have quite all and precisely what we want; and is it not, then, wisest to make the best of what we really have? If I want to make a bouquet, had I not better gather such flowers as are at my command, and arrange them to the best of my ability, than repine because the exact blossoms I would choose are not in my *parterre*, and so let the humbler blooms go unregarded, or throw them tastelessly together? Because I have no brilliant exotics, shall I scorn the wild flowers and the lowly mignonette that grow profusely all around me? Because I cannot fare sumptuously, shall I starve on what may after all be angels' food, though it is not that for which I longed? Shall I not rather take the good God has given me, and thank Him for it, and make the *very* best of it? And it is astonishing how much may be made out of very unpromising materials, if only one is resolved to accept the inevitable, and not to indulge in weak regrets for what is not, and probably will never be."

"You are so thoroughly a strong-minded woman, Anne, and I am so foolish, so feeble in my resolves, so given to sudden and passionate outbreaks both in deed and word,

which afterwards I would give worlds to undo and to unsay."

Now Anne was by no means pleased at the idea of her imputed strong-mindedness. The *rôle* of a "strong-minded woman" was not what she wished to enact. Anne had suffered, and she had conquered, but not in her own strength, not till after many struggles, many failures, many days of something like despair and utter weariness of heart, of which even her mother knew but little. And it pained her to be told that she was strong—so very weak, for two long years, she had been, according to her own judgment of herself. But I am not sure but that she was strongest when she thought herself the weakest. He who fights on, hour after hour, sorely wounded, half-disarmed, and fainting with weariness and pain, yet refusing to yield to the enemy while one spark of life remains, is surely a greater, grander man than he who rides with acclamation and flourish of trumpets into the lists, and, gaining a speedy and brilliant victory, retires unworn and unhurt, the hero of the multitude!

But what was in Anne's heart to say she left unsaid, simply because she felt that Clarice would not comprehend; and all at once it flashed upon her what it was that really interposed between Gerard and his wife. Clarice was right; she could not understand him. There never could have been a time when she did at all know her husband's inner self. Even in the first glow and warmth of their early loves they must have been in mind and character apart; and then, as is so frequently the case in nearly all rashly-contracted or unequal marriages, the husband's mind had grown and grown till it came to its full stature, while the wife's had progressed but slowly and feebly, and was still very much what it had been in the days when first they met.

Thus Anne saw at a glance what she would rather not have seen; and she felt puzzled how to meet the case; for

that Clarice, contradictory as it may seem, at once misunderstood and understood too well her husband was apparent. Also, it was clear that she was exacting, that she wanted from him what he would never give—nay, that she demanded of him what it was not in his power to accord to her or to any woman. Clarice should have married a man whose life was more on the surface, who could occupy himself more with the trivialities of life; who would be unreasonable, and perhaps sometimes tyrannical and selfish, but yet given to demonstrations of tenderness, and fond of honied words when all went well with him. She would have been quite happy, even though occasionally ill-used, if her husband in his accesses of good temper had lavished on her loving epithets, and given her plenty of warm, fond kisses, and talked with her about her neighbours, and about any little interests that they had in common; for Clarice, though a good and in some respects a noble woman, was not always rational or consistent.

There really are some women of the spaniel type—"the more they are beaten the better they be;" that is, the fonder and more devoted they become. The dog licks the hand that strikes him, and fawns at the foot that spurns him; and the woman clings more and more closely to the tyrant who sometimes makes her life intolerable, if only at other times he speaks soft words and makes a pet of her. Still, both dog and woman must really and truly love their master before they can take thus kindly to hard usage. And of this type of woman was Clarice Thurston; she was miserable without fond words, and constant interchange of sentiment, and frequent notice. She would have been far happier certainly with these, even had they been coupled with frequent harshness and many cruel words, than she was with unvarying kindness and countless indulgences without them. Anne half wondered whether she had not been happier as Madame Gerard without claims upon any one's best love. Undoubtedly in the Tylney

House days she had been more outwardly content; she had accepted her fate, painful as it was, and she made the best of circumstances which decidedly she did not now. Anne began to feel that her intercourse with Clarice would be simply distressing if every time they met this theme of conversation was to be pursued; it seemed to her that Clarice would be for ever considering herself aggrieved, and that she, Anne Musgrave, could do nothing towards remedying such grievances. All she could do was to entreat Clarice to be patient and to look on the bright side, counting up her mercies rather than dwelling on her disappointments. She would counsel her, too, to be very busy, and she would propose that they should work together, and perhaps when Mrs. Thurston was stronger—her health had been failing her ever since her baby's death—she would feel more disposed to take a cheerful view of things, since morbid tendencies and a weak state of body were not unfrequently concomitants.

Suddenly Clarice broke in upon her meditations—

"Oh, Anne! I often think it would have been better had I gone away to France as I intended, remaining dead to my husband to the end! Then you would have been here in my place, a meet companion for Gerard, and a worthy mistress of Canonbury Holt, and all would have gone well."

"Clarice!" said Anne, sternly, "if you say such things, you and I cannot longer be close friends. That strange era in our lives—it is past now, we will not talk of it—was just as God willed it! We proposed, and He disposed. He took the matter into His own hands. Shall we question His providence, His wisdom, His loving-kindness? Depend upon it, sooner or later, the truth would have transpired; and oh, Clarice! if it had been too late. If I *had been* here in the position you now hold, and then found out that I had no right—that unwittingly I had usurped your place, that I was really still *Anne Musgrave*, and had been nothing more all the time I thought,—it is too

dreadful to think of! I cannot speak of it! Clarice, if you will talk of old times you and I cannot meet."

"Do not be angry," pleaded Clarice, through her tears. "If I lost your friendship, I should be indeed unhappy. I know I am very unwise, very unlike what I ought to be, and Gerard is so good—so very good. He never loses patience with me, let me try him as I will; but I have thought of late it will not be for very long that I shall be a trouble to him; a year or two, perhaps, and then he will be free again. I shall be very glad, for I am so tired, and life seems sometimes a burden that I have not strength to bear; and Gerard will be happy, and——"

But Clarice's voice failed her. The poor little thing was so willing to die that she would have given herself up to death like Iphigenia of old, had it been required of her. She would have been a second Alcestis, could Admettus possibly have been benefited by her self-immolation; but it was the sting of death to look her last on Gerard, to part from him, to think that a day would come when farewells must be spoken, and one go forth on the shadowy way unknown, and the other stay behind to enjoy the brightness and the love of earth, and possibly, nay, probably, to begin life afresh. Anne could only throw her arms round the trembling little figure, and draw it into a close embrace, as if it were indeed a child, rather than a woman ten years older than herself, whom she was striving to console.

"Oh, love me, love me, Anne!" cried the poor little thing, clasping her tiny hands. "I want so much to be loved; my heart is cold for want of it. Once I was stronger; I could do without love; I could bear to be lonely; but it is not so now. I must have some one to love me!"

"Gerard loves you, dearest."

"It is such a stately love! I want something warmer and brighter. Yes! hold me tight, dear Anne; keep your

arms close round me; it does me good: it stills this weary pain. I am so glad you are at home again."

It seemed useless to reason any more. Anne felt a great pity surging up in her heart towards the fragile woman, who clung to her as she might have done to her own mother years and years before. It was as if Gerard's child, not Gerard's wife, came to her for tenderness and love; and she wiped away the tears from the sweet blue eyes, and smoothed the early-silvered hair, and spoke cheerily and soothingly, till there came a smile to the pale lips, and a faint tinge of colour to the faded cheeks; till there was a look of peace upon the worn face pressed against her bosom, and Clarice's weary heart was for a little while at rest.

Afterwards they went out on to the western terrace to see the setting sun, or, rather, the afterglow that lingered on the sea, and that was flushing still the beetling crags of some of the great mountains, and touching with faint roseate hues the silvery cliffs of distant Argendale, and lighting up the solemn, pine-clad heights of Earnseat, by the Channel. It was the first fine sunset they had for many a day; it was the last time, as it was the first time, that Anne and Clarice ever stood on that terrace, watching the dying splendour of the crimsoned west, and the long lines of light upon the restless waters. The autumnal breeze swept up from the sea, and Clarice drew her shawl shiveringly around her. Anne hurried her indoors; but she paused a minute on the threshold of her home, and turned round and looked lovingly and lingeringly on the beautiful landscape, more beautiful still for the soft, shadowy veil of the gathering eveningtide.

"It is very fair," she said, almost in a whisper; "I have never seen aught fairer than this lovely land of the Thurstons; and it will be just as fair and sweet when I am in the grave."

For the remainder of the evening Anne contrived to

keep Clarice from the one theme she seemed intent upon pursuing. She talked about the school on the marsh; about some families at Cockleham in whom she wished Mrs. Thurston to be interested; about the Redmaynes; about Chalfonts politics; about new books; and about the plants and seeds from the Cornice, which were already under the care of the Holt head-gardener. Then they discoursed about Georgy, and wondered what would become of Adeline growing up under such remarkable mismanagement. And so the hours passed, till Captain Conyngham himself came up to escort "Mith Muthgwave" home, James not having returned from Keirmouth Station, whither he had gone to look after a new plough which it was rumoured had arrived from Easthambury, and was waiting till some one should send orders for its safe removal.

Anne reached home terribly tired, and more depressed than she had been for the last three years.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE METHODY PARSON.

THE next evening Anne went unexpectedly into the kitchen, and found Judy deeply absorbed in a well-worn, ancient-looking little volume, which she was poring over by the fading light, and which she hurried into her pocket, as, with much confusion of face and manner, she recognised Miss Musgrave.

"Judy," said Anne, surprised and vexed at the girl's

evident and unwonted desire for concealment, "I am afraid your book is not a good one."

"Indeed, Miss Anne, and it is a very good one, only I cannot understand it. I wouldn't read a bad book, or one that the mistress and you disapproved of, on any account; please don't think I wanted to hide it, ma'am."

"Then why did you hide it, Judy?"

"Because I was ashamed."

"Ashamed of a *good* book, Judy?"

"No; I was not aahamed of the book, but of myself for poring over it. There, I know I am talking nonsense, ma'am, so I may as well show it to you at once. I may trust you, Miss Anne, I am sure; but *please* I don't want anybody to know." And Judy drew from her dress-pocket a small, calf-bound *Murray's Grammar* which Anne knew had been consigned to the lumber-room full twenty years before.

"There, ma'am, you see it is no improper or foolish book."

"*Murray's Grammar!* What are you trying to find out, Judy?"

"I want to learn, ma'am, how to speak and write the English language with propriety. I wish to study Orthography, Etymology, Syntax, and Prosody; and I've gone all through Orthography, but I cannot say it teaches me much; and now I am in Etymology, and I am regularly *bogged.* As for Syntax and Prosody, I have *read* them, but they might as well be Fijian."

"As well be *what*, Judy?" Anne did not catch the last word, or thought she was mistaken.

"The Fiji language, ma'am—what they speak in the Fiji Islands, you know."

"Who told you about Fiji?" asked Anne, wondering greatly; for missionary meetings were unknown in Chalfonts, and missionary reports were not plentiful at the Holt Farm.

Judy coloured, and twisted her apron nervously.

"Some one I spoke to at Cockleham, Miss Anne; some one that came there this summer. He told us all about the Fiji Islands; and when I came home I looked for them on the great map in the hall, and I found them just as he said, in the Western Hemisphere, in Polynesia, in the South Pacific Ocean."

"Who is '*he*' you are talking about, Judy? I did not know that the geography of the Cockleham men went further than the bay."

"No more it does, Miss Anne. Bless you, they were that stupid they didn't understand one half they heard. It was a preacher, ma'am—a Methody preacher."

Anne remembered that Bertie had told her that during the summer there had been a sort of evening service at Cockleham, conducted by some itinerant Methodists, who made Earnseat their head-quarters, and the servants from the Holt and from the Farm had been permitted to attend, their masters and mistresses thinking that it was possible they might be more benefited by the Methody preacher's untutored enthusiasm than by Dr. Redmayne's classical dissertations on Hebrew roots and the Semitic languages, with critical renderings and interpretations of St. Paul's Epistles—interpretations which some of his hearers suspected would have considerably astonished the great Apostle of the Gentiles had he chanced to "sit under" the learned rector of Chalfonts-cum-Canonbury for a single Sunday.

Bertie and James had gone down to the preaching one fine June evening, but, though they respected the earnestness of the minister and his hearers, the service was not according to their idea of reverence, and there was too much of brimstone in the doctrines propounded; and the singing of "Lydia," and "Devizes," and "Calcutta," which were shouted by the men and screamed by the women in an almost impossible key, was shattering to

nerves attuned to simple harmony. But when, after the sermon, a sort of prayer-meeting began, and three men prayed aloud simultaneously, and others groaned, and cried "Amen," and shouted "Hallelujah," the Musgraves were thankful to escape from the religious Babel into the open air, where the grandeur of sea, and sky, and mountain was around them, and they could lift up their eyes to the hills, and remember that the Psalmist had declared, "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God!" And, sitting on the rocks, with the calm waves ebbing at their feet, and the solitary moorland behind, and the vast dome of silent sky above, they sang together to the grand old tune of "Farrant"—

"O God! our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come;
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home."

But, though far from edified themselves, James and Bertie had both agreed that this strange sort of service might have more power over a set of wild and half-amphibious creatures, as the men and women of Cockleham and Flookbridge really were, than the most glorious cathedral worship or the most solemn ministrations of the Nonconforming churches; and such of their servants as chose to attend the "Methody meetings," as they were called, had free leave to do so, and nothing was uttered in their hearing to prejudice their minds against the mode in which the veritable Gospel—sometimes, though, nearly overpowered by the thunders of the Law—was preached unto them.

And it came to pass that in the course of the summer Judy and the dairymaid were declared to be converted. And, as in Judy's case the conversion was evidently a sound one, both James and Bertie fervently rejoiced, and,

to Dr. Redmayne's extreme disgust, subscribed a handsome sum towards turning one of the cottages into a sort of school-room and conventicle, where the Methody congregation could be accommodated through the winter.

Thus much in explanation of Judy's reference to the Fiji Islands, whither her new pastor, the Reverend Ebenezer Tonks, was intending to proceed, having, as he sincerely believed, a call to go out and preach the Gospel to the savage tribes of Polynesia.

"But why are you anxious to study English grammar, Judy?" asked Anne, looking at the girl's honest, intelligent, but deeply blushing face, and remembering also that it was admitted on all hands that the Rev. Ebenezer himself was quite indifferent to the rules of syntax, and had probably but the vaguest notions of etymology.

"I had better tell you, ma'am," replied poor Judy, nearly ready to cry; "it has been on my mind to speak to the mistress for the last week or two, only we have been so put out with late dinners that ought to be suppers, and breakfasts at dinner-time, and teas without end; and that awful child—begging your pardon, Miss Anne—going and nearly killing herself in her wicked tantrums; and the jabbering of that Frenchwoman, that is a poor deluded Papist, and the impudence of the Captain's man, that makes me feel unchristianlike at the very thought of it; and the fine airs of the grand my-lady-nursemaid, who wants waiting on hand and foot,—that I have seemed to have no time to turn myself. It's three weeks since I went to class; for though my mistress said I might go, and Rhoda could manage if I got all ready, I did not feel free in my own mind to neglect my duties; so I stopped, and sent up the late dinner handsomely, though I must say I shall be very glad to get back to the regular old ways again. But to go back to what I was saying. I want the mistress to know that the Methody parson and I have made it up to be married next spring, and that we are

going out to Polynesia in a missionary ship; and that's why I am studying the grammar, Miss Anne. I think a minister's wife ought to be knowledgable. Look at Mrs. Redmayne, that talks so beautiful; and Miss Jessie, they say, knows as much as her pa."

The idea of Judy comparing herself with Mrs. Redmayne was so ludicrous that Anne was glad her face was in the shadow, for not for the world would she have hurt the young girl's feelings.

"Are you quite sure that Mr.—I forget his name—is a really good man, Judy—a true and sincere Christian?"

"Oh, Miss Anne!" And Judy lifted both her hands, letting "Lindley Murray" fall inside the fender. "He's one of the Lord's own servants. He would go from here to Ribbleton barefoot, if he thought he could awaken one poor careless sinner. He would cross the bay at midnight, without a guide, and the tide coming in, and risk the quicksands, if he thought by doing it he could save a soul from hell. Oh! he is grand about the quicksands, and the barren rocks, and the raging waves; and he *applies* it all till you can't hear a word he says for the sobbing of the people, and their crying out to the Lord to have mercy upon them! Oh, Miss Anne! do go and hear him preach! I don't say you have not been converted, for I am sure you have; but it will do you good, indeed it will!"

"I will go and hear him some evening, Judy, very soon."

Little did Anne think how very soon she and Ebenezer Tonks would be face to face under circumstances which would prove the truth of each—of all who called themselves the people of the Lord. A dark hour was coming for Chalfonts, an hour in which the secrets of many hearts were to be revealed, when it would be known whose feet were indeed resting on the Rock of Ages, and who

were without God in the world, having no hope of eternal life, no anchor whereby they might be held in safety while the tempest raged about them.

"I will go," said Anne again, "though it is possible, Judy, his preaching may not be to me what it is to you; yet if he be, as I doubt not he is, in earnest in the great work of preaching Christ's Gospel, I shall respect him, even though I cannot like his style, or even agree with all that he may say."

"I don't look for you to, Miss Anne. There's no need that we should all think alike about everything. We couldn't do it, you know, for the Lord has made us different in our minds. Now, a man may know the grammar and the dictionary from end to end, and he may tell the same story as my Ebenezer, but he will tell it all in fine words, and use beautiful language, such as we find in books, and the message might come home with power to the gentlefolks, because they heard it in their own tongue; but it would never touch the hearts of the rude men and women down in Cockleham; and there's many more like them. They want plain speaking; they want strong speaking, too; they are stupid, and they want startling, and it does them good to hear about hell-fire, and everlasting torment, and the unquenchable flame. Oh, ma'am, you should hear Ebenezer! He shouts to them that they are all damned, and the Devil has got them, and as good as tells them there's no hope. Then, when they begin to cry and beat their breasts, and wish they had never been born, he says, says he, standing up like an angel, 'There is a way of escape, my brothers and my sisters! Flee from hell! Come to Christ! Here He is to-night, a-waiting to forgive you! He loves you already,' says he. Then he goes on and shows them Jesus; and though the mistress and the master didn't quite like Ebenezer's way, the Cocklers do, and lots of them come to the Lord. That's how I came, Miss Anne. I didn't

like the Methodies at all, but now I say, God prosper them!"

"God prosper all who love the Lord Jesus Christ, and labour in His blessed name!"

"Oh, Miss Anne, dear, you would make a beautiful Methody!"

"No, Judy, I could never be a Methody! Methodism and I have little in common, save, I hope, love of the same Master. Also, there are divers sorts of Methodies, or, as we ought to say, Methodists. I know little about them, except that they differ widely, and, I am afraid, are often very bitter against each other; but that is not a fault to be imputed to Methodists alone. I believe your kind is a branch of the Primitive sort, which I really like the most as far as I have seen, though I could not worship often with the Primitives—at least, the Primitives of these parts—because they make so much noise, and also because I think it would confuse me to be listening to three separate prayers, all uttered in concert. And the constant interruptions of 'Amen,' and 'Bless the Lord,' and 'Hallelujah,' and 'Glory be to God,' would only distract me, and make me miserable."

"To see the difference there is now between people! Why, it heartens *me* up till I want to begin on my own tack!"

"Much good that would do to your fellow-worshippers if some one was already praying."

"Well, it *is* a gabble like sometimes, but I dare say the Lord understands it."

"Certainly He does, if it is a sincere gabble; but you see what is mere peculiarity in you would be irreverence and mockery in me; therefore I cannot turn Methody, Judy."

"But, miss, there are grand Methody churches, Ebenezer says, churches with spires and bells. No, I am not sure about the bells. Oh, I do miss the bells, and I am

afraid I like to see the surplices on the chorister-boys, though Brother Bunting, from Kentdale, says they are Popish rags."

"Never mind Brother Bunting, Judy! So long as people love one Master, it does not much matter about the way of worship. Only, while you hold to your own way, do not quarrel with other people, who have another way."

"But, Miss Anne, you will tell the mistress for me? and oh, if you'd help me to improve myself a bit! I should like to know grammar, and geography, and history! I have read two histories of England, but they are not very interesting, and I have learnt some French from the fine lady's-maid—I thought I might as well get some good out of her—but I wish it were Fiji instead. You don't happen to know any *Fiji*, Miss Anne?"

"No, indeed, Judy; or I would teach you with all the pleasure imaginable."

"You have been so much in foreign countries."

"Only in countries where they speak French, and German, and Italian—yes, and Spanish too; I learned a good deal of Spanish while I was in Spain; but I never heard one word of Fiji, or saw a Fijian native in my life."

"Oh, ma'am!" said Judy, going suddenly to the window.

"What is the matter, Judy?"

"Oh, Miss Anne, such a sky! It's awful! Come and look at it!"

"We shall have wind," said Anne; "there will be a terrible hurricane presently. Hush! it is beginning now! Do you not hear the sea?"

"It is far out, though, yet; but I can see a white ridge of breakers just where that sickly line of light comes down from yonder queer cloud. Yes; there's wind in the sky, but it won't come before the morning, Miss Anne. Don't you see the *mare's-tails* and the *hen-scratches*? They always come awhile before the wind; but I do not

like the look of that heap of bottom-packs over there, beyond Foudrey Pile."

"Mare's-tails" and "hen-scratches," be it known, are, in the northern vernacular, those peculiar feathery-looking clouds which herald so often the rising of the storm. The "mare's-tails" are long, fantastically shaped, and sweeping across the heavens like white, twisted comets with convulsed tails. The "hen-scratches" are smaller and more compact, and assume no definite form, while "bottom-packs" are heavy, sullen-looking masses, which tell of rain in store when the wind shall have subsided.

"I don't like the look of the sky at all," said Judy, uneasily; "it won't be just yet, but there will be awful work before this time to-morrow night."

CHAPTER XL.

THE HIGH TIDE.

THE night closed in, and still the storm did not rise to any height. A brisk wind blew, indeed, which towards the time of high tide seemed inclined to turn to something serious; but by daybreak all was tolerably calm again, and the Chalfonts people, and their neighbours all along the coast, began to congratulate themselves that nothing more than a stiff gale was to be apprehended.

"The thawm is gone inland," said Captain Conyngham, as he took his seat at the breakfast-table; "I am quite thowy, Mithith Muthgwave; I hoped we thould thee thome fun! I would like to thee thith coast in a gwate thawm."

"You may see it yet, Captain Conyngham," replied

Bertie gravely. "This storm is coming on steadily enough. I never saw such a sky! It is low water now—wait till the tide comes up. Hush! is that thunder?"

"No, it is the sea getting up, Bertie! I never heard that hollow roar but once, and that was when the sea-wall at Leven's Point was washed away, many years ago," replied Anne, who had been out reconnoitring the prospect. "While I stood upon the Brow I saw a dark cloud come suddenly from the west, and all at once it hung over the bay like a waterspout, and then it was caught up, and torn and twisted into a thousand shreds, which were whirled about the sky in all directions."

"As I looked from my bedroom window," said Georgy, "I saw the fishing-boats were all coming home."

"I wonder any of the men were hardy enough to put to sea under such a sky," remarked Anne. "God pity all the poor creatures who may be too far out to make port before the tempest comes!"

"*Before* it comes?" said Amy; "why, Anne, it is shaking the house at this moment! And look at the tree yonder, all straining one way, as if Titans were uprooting them. There! the great branch of that old pine is gone! See, it goes sailing across the moor as if it were a feather!"

An hour later, and the storm was indeed upon them. In its resistless fury the giant blast came on, sweeping all before it, tearing up the largest trees, scattering the loose stones of which the low enclosure-walls were built, shaking down stalwart chimney-stacks, that had withstood the fiercest gales of many a year, dashing itself in impotent rage against the cliffs, and wildly marching on to the defiles of the hills, where it wrestled with crag and scaur, and filled the vales with its awful, impetuous thunder.

A little after noon, James came in with firm, compressed lips and pale face, his Scotch cap fastened on his head, and his plaid tightly wrapped around him.

"Bertie," he said, quietly, "I am going down to the works; the engineer is away; and if ever the embankment is to be tried, it will be tried to-day. The men will look to me for orders."

Bertie had been grave enough all the morning—grave enough to pique Amy, and to bring down upon herself a shower of senseless banter from the gallant Captain. But now there was a wild dread in her eyes, and her lips were quivering with the apprehensions they could not speak. She threw her arms around her husband.

"James, you shall not go! You must not! I cannot let you go into certain danger."

"My love, I must go. There is no one there who will know how to act, should any inrush of the sea take place. Most of the men are strangers to the shore, and know no thing of the terrors of our great tides. They will not abandon their post, and their lives may be endangered."

"Very well, then I go with you!"

"No, Bertie, I cannot permit that. If harm should happen to me, you must be safe—for the children's sake, remember."

"My children are inexpressibly dear to me, but my husband is dearer far! I will go with you, James."

"No, my dear!" and there was a decision in his tone, and an authority in his manner, as, tenderly but determinately, he unwound his wife's clasping arms, which convinced her that he would be obeyed. She sat down again, subdued but hopeless. For now the deep roar of the Channel waves could be heard through the tumult of the storm, and it was not half-tide as yet!

Captain Conyngham tried to console her. "My dear Mithith Muthgwave, I will go with your good huthband, and thare the danther, if there be any. I can thwim like a fith; and I will promith you to bwing him back all wight. I thall enjoy the fun! I never thaw an inunda-

thun in my life; it will be a new thenthathun. Oh, deaw me! that whymes, dothn't it?"

"You had better keep where you are, Conyngham," said James, roughly. "You will only hamper me and worry the men. I tell you it is a question of life or death, of ruin or prosperity, that is going to be decided to-day. It is not a case of fun."

"My deaw fellaw!" began the Captain; but he was a very drawling speaker, as well as an inveterate lisper; and, before he could say what he was intending, James was gone, and Bertie had flown to her own room. If she might not go with her husband, in solitude only could she bear herself. Anne had slipped away: she had put on her waterproof cloak, and tied a plaid securely over her head—such a thing as a bonnet or a hat would have been whisked away at the first blast. She had no husband to bid her stay at home, and her mother was with the children, who were scared at the storm. She felt that she could not remain indoors. She could keep out of the way of flying branches and stray pieces of thatch—for some thatches were torn away, rafters and all, and were whirling in the darkened air, like so many light wisps of straw; and she would not go near the cliffs, lest she should be blown over. She went out on the open moor, far away from cottages and trees, and where she could obtain some sort of shelter when the blasts were most furious, by crouching in the hollows among the fern and heather. There she could see all around her for many, many miles; she could see the grey town, and the Priory-church, and the green fells beyond, and the solemn mountains in the distance. But they seemed strangely close at hand in that weird, livid light, that cast an unearthly hue on every object far and near. It was more like transparent darkness than light, Anne thought, as she gazed in awe at the clearly-defined outline of crags and mountains many miles away.

But it was not upon the heights that she looked with the most fearful interest. The moor on which she stood commanded the whole extent of the great bay from point to point; nearly all its inlets, and the estuary itself, from Earnseat Head and Grangeside to the far-away viaduct-works now being carried over the Channel, for the railway.

The bay itself was one seething mass of foam, with inky hollows in between the crests of the great tumbling waves; there was still a vast expanse of land on the Argendale shore uncovered, but then it was not till full tide that the sea reached the cliffs in that direction. On the Cockleham side, and towards Earnseat, it was far otherwise. There the sands were early covered, and in some states of the wind with incredible rapidity. Strangers were ever and anon drowned on the fatal Earnseat shore from the swift rising of the incoming tide.

As Anne looked, she saw marching up the Channel from the open sea a great wall of water; as she watched it far away at Leven's Point, it seemed to advance slowly and majestically, and it appeared to be about a yard in height. But ere she could think much about it, the great "*bore*," or, as some people call it, the "*eger*," was level with the spot on which she stood. Then she saw that it was far higher than she had imagined, and in shape it resembled two walls, meeting at a right angle. Like the bows of a vessel it looked, as it came on, stretching quite across the Channel, which was about a quarter of a mile wide; and as it came all that had been rock, and sand, and shingle, was changed as if by magic into a tossing, tumbling sea, flinging up briny spray, and rushing on inland after the *bore*, as if it were playing at the game of "follow the leader."

Anne had seen the *bore* in the Channel several times, but never had she seen a *bore* like unto this one, which the gale was driving straight up the estuary at least two hours earlier than usual. There was as much water now

in the estuary as she had ever seen at full tide in highest springs. What, then, would it be at actual high water? and the wind was forcing it on as if the land for many miles must be submerged. Suddenly the gale changed from a sort of mad whirlwind, playing a thousand pranks on sea and land, into a steady, settled blast, loud, deep, resistless, terrible! Like the spirit of desolation, it swept on, gathering force each moment, lashing the waves to fury, and driving them on with a power that it was horrible to contemplate. It was grand, doubtless; but grand with the grandeur of the tempest, when thunderbolts are striking all around; or of the devouring flames and the blood-red skies of night, when a city is consuming!

As Anne crept up the hollow in which she had crouched to gather breath and strength, she thought she heard another sound mingling faintly with the roar of the solemn blast and the wild thunder of the waves. She listened—yes, the alarm bells were ringing from the tower of the Priory-church; a sort of loud, quick, monotonous chime, the three largest bells ringing backwards. Once before Anne had heard them, when the Aldingham stables were on fire; they were only rung for fires and for peril from the sea, and never in the latter case save when the danger was most imminent.

If Anne could only cross the moor about a hundred yards further, she would be in sight of the great marsh, and she would know how the works were standing, and if the little settlement at the head of the marsh were safe. She tried to struggle on, but fell at every two or three steps, or, rather, she was compelled to sink on her knees, to avoid being thrown violently on her face; but yet she strove, for to turn back and face the wind was impossible; she could almost as well hope to stem the angry tide below. She made but little way, however, and was just giving up in despair, when striding across the heather, she saw a tall, gaunt man coming towards her. With long

legs he strode across the hollows, and with sinewy arms he wrestled with the blast.

It was the Methody preacher; and, though Anne had never spoken to him in her life, they met now as if they were comrades on the field of battle. He knew Miss Musgrave, and, finding that she wished to reach the same post of observation as himself, he offered his arm, simply saying, "I am Ebenezer Tonks. Will you take my arm? I am strong, and I am not afraid of death, and I am going to see if I can help them on the marsh yonder."

"My brother is there," said Anne, breathlessly.

"And also Mr. Thurston. I saw and spoke with him two hours ago. Hold fast, Miss Musgrave. I will leave you in one of the hollows overlooking the marsh. I can make my way down this cliff where it slopes towards the shore. Courage! another yard or two."

Yes, another yard or two; and they came in sight of the marsh, or what had been the marsh, for now it was a *bay*, covered with great surging billows. The new sea-wall was gone; the works were swept away. Only the school-house and the cottages at the head of the marsh were standing, though against their walls the sea was beating furiously. There was yet more than an hour before full tide, and every moment the waters rose visibly.

Anne turned to her companion, but already he was swinging himself down the rocks. She sank down in the hollow, where, comparatively speaking, she was sheltered from the wind; and, gazing on the wild waste of crested waves below, she prayed, "Oh, God of mercy! save them —save them!"

No other words could she find; and the dreary alarm-bells and the voiceless prayer went on in sad monotony. In five minutes Anne felt as if she had prayed and kept watch there for long hours.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE RESCUE.

AND as Anne sat in the rocky hollow the waters rose higher and higher, and the tide came in with ever-increasing fury. She had lost sight of the great bay now; even the crescent-shaped cliffs of Cockleham were hidden from her view; but the estuary, with its raging channel, and flooded from shore to shore, was straight before her eyes; while, at her feet, as it were, not many yards below, foamed an angry sea, where but a few hours ago had been the half-drained marsh and the "works" that had swallowed up so large a sum of money, and the strong sea-wall upon which so much toil, and time, and coin of the realm had been expended. Of course the remains of the causeway were gone, but whether only submerged or swept away Anne could not tell; and would the school-house and the cottages at the head of the marsh stand? that was the question.

Either the wind had fallen, or Anne was sheltered by the rocks and the rising moorland behind her; and she managed to creep along a half-defined path, which was little more than a sheep-track, till she had rounded a small promontory which brought her to a point commanding the whole salt-marsh, and the mosses, and the newly-cultivated lands. It was all sea! raging, foaming sea-water, rushing in an overwhelming tide over the face of the whole country. Then she saw how terrible was this visitation, and how still more terrible it might be, and probably would be, before the ebb.

Presently some sheep came swimming with the stream, and then some oxen; and the poor beasts, she thought, turned their dying eyes towards her, as they were hurried

by, looking imploringly, it seemed to her, for human aid and sympathy. And more and more cattle followed,—some passively borne on, some struggling for dear life as persistently as a drowning man would have struggled. And now several horses were in the current, but Anne thought they would make for the shore and be saved; they seemed to have a finer instinct than the other animals. The grain had ripened late that summer, as it often does in those northern counties, and some was still unreaped, and some standing yet in shocks among the stubble; and now it was all swept away: and, by the pieces of rafters, remnants of thatch, hurdles, bundles of straw, and scattered hay, that soon began to appear on the crests and among the hollows of the waves, it was very evident that some low-lying homesteads were being involved in the general devastation.

Where would the mischief end? The mosses and the marshes, some of them lying far inland, all communicated with each other, more or less, by means of some runnel, or rivulet, or dyke, and sometimes by a narrow connecting valley, the boulders of which had indubitably been tide-washed at certain remote periods. Many a year had elapsed since those green valleys had been visited by the salt sea-wave; only the rain of heaven had washed the tangled brushwood, and bathed the fretted rock, all mantled over with trailing weeds, and feathery ferns, and coral wreaths of the blood-red, shining cranesbill. But now the briny waters rushed in, and rose from height to height, and tore away the slenderer shrubs, and bore down the young ash-trees, and loosened the roots of some stripling sycamore, so that they never prospered again.

Looking down from the hills and the higher grounds generally, these green levels and peat-mosses were like a chain of dry lakes, one feeding the other, and running far into the land; taking so circuitous a course that people often said Canonbury Holt and the more elevated portions

of Chalfonts would be insulated in case these lakes were ever filled again. And now they were filled; and Canonbury Holt and Farm, and "the top of the town," and other favoured localities, were for the time being as much islands as are the isles of Jersey, Guernsey, Alderney, and Sark, in permanency.

And then, though not long past noon, a strange darkness, like the shadows of falling night, gathered over the face of the inundated country; and in the awful blackness men could scarcely see each other's faces. A thick mist closed down upon the bay, and shrouded from view not only the distant mountains but the nearer fells, and the rain began to pour in torrents; and, with the mighty roar of the sea, and with the deep sound of the wind, were mingled peals of heavy thunder; though which was sea, or which wind, or which thunder, it was impossible to distinguish; all joined together in one wild, deafening uproar, that seemed to mingle earth and sky and ocean.

Anne clambered on till she was nearly opposite Clarice's school-house, and then she saw streaming from one of its upper windows a red neckerchief or shawl—a signal of distress. She was so near that she could have scrambled down the rock and walked along the new causeway to the door of the school in about three minutes, had there been no angry flood between. As it was, a great and deep gulf intervened, which Anne could no more cross than she could the mighty channel of the estuary. She went down the cliff as near as she could to the water's edge, and found that it was still rising.

Some one was in the school-house certainly, and it would not stand much longer against that overwhelming tide. Where, oh! where, were the boats? There were none generally on that part of the shore; and, though there were plenty at Cockleham, would not the Cockleham people want them for themselves? And, besides, could any small boat live in such a sea? Would it ever

get round from Cockleham to the great salt-marsh without being dashed to pieces on the rocks?

While she was straining her eyes through the gloom, and listening with something like horror to the fury of the elements, she thought she heard a human voice. She turned, expecting to see Ebenezer Tonks again; but it was Gerard, who, breathless and ghastly, stood by her side.

"Anne," he said, hoarsely, "what do you do here?—go home!"

"I cannot," she replied; "it will not hurt me. I am in no danger; but, oh, Gerard, some one is in the schoolhouse. Look! that red flag—it asks for help."

She thought he became still whiter as he gazed; then he said, as he grasped her hand, "Anne, that is Clarice's red shawl; *she* is there."

"Clarice there! Impossible! She may have left the shawl."

"No; I saw her in it early this morning. She came in from the garden with it tied over her head."

"But Clarice would never come out in such weather?"

"Of late she has taken to go out, regardless of the weather; but I never thought of her venturing forth this morning. I was hurrying up from the long moss. I had been trying to save poor Job Salkeld's sheep and his three heifers, when I met Swingleswairy, sent by Mrs. Twentyman to look for me. Clarice went out in spite of all remonstrances, when the wind lulled awhile, several hours ago. She thought the storm was over, though Mrs. Twentyman assured her it was only resting while it gathered strength; but she said she *must* go down to her school; she had missed two days, and one of the children was ill. And go she did, to Mrs. Twentyman's extreme distress. Anne, what shall we do? The building will never stand till the tide goes down. I would give ten thousand pounds for a boat."

"Let us go over the moor to Cockleham; we could but try to get a boat round."

"It could never be got round—not in time. Anne, I can swim well. I will go to her. See, the water is nearly level with the bedroom window. Ah, what is that?"

"It is Lyulph, I believe."

"Strange that he should be there. He does not like Clarice: I never knew him follow her before. I remember now, I missed him when I wanted him."

In another minute Lyulph had landed at his master's feet. He had had some difficulty in breasting the waves, and he seemed pretty well exhausted. Still he whined, and looked piteously at Gerard, as if urging him to some instant course of action.

"See!" cried Anne, suddenly, "there is something round his neck. Oh, he understands; he wants it to be taken from him."

The "something" proved to be Clarice's ivory tablets, which she always carried with her. On one leaf was written, in large, straggling characters, "We are drowning, the child and I. For God's sake, help us quickly!"

There was a cry of agony in every pencil stroke, Anne thought. She shuddered and trembled so that she sank on the ground.

"I will go to her at any peril," said Gerard. "Poor child, poor little Clarice! If I cannot save her, I can at least die with her. She shall not die thus terribly alone."

He looked a moment at the raging flood, and threw off his coat, and plaid, and waistcoat, and was battling with the waves, before Anne realised what his intentions were. To stand there herself was impossible. She must be stirring, she must be *doing*, even if it were all in vain. All the while she was praying; but she scarcely knew it. It was one of those cases in which praying and breathing seem to go on together, as unconsciously as ceaselessly. She determined to go back across the moor, and get to

Cockleham if possible. At any risk a boat must be found, and brought quickly to the rescue. She could row herself; she would take an oar; she felt as if endowed with supernatural strength and energy. So, gathering together her plaid, she set forth to face the blast and the deluge of rain that drove straight against her; but her courage sank when she felt how difficult it was to proceed, how slow must be her progress; when she reflected that Cockleham lay on the other side the moor, and that the moments were more precious than gold and diamonds.

"Miss Musgrave," said a voice close to her, "have you seen Mr. Musgrave or Mr. Thurston?"

Anne explained how Gerard and she had just parted; and she besought the speaker, who was no other than Ebenezer Tonks, to hurry at once to Cockleham in search of boats.

"No need to go so far," he answered; "there are boats in the market-place, and about the Priory-church; they came up by the mosses from Levens and Flookbridge. All the houses at Mile End, and lower down than Skeldale Rise, are under water. The poor people are saved, but their beasts are mostly gone, and their hay and forage; and the corn that is not washed away is spoilt in the granaries."

All this while he was dragging Anne along, holding her tight with one brawny, sinewy arm, and fighting for her and for himself against the storm.

"But no one is drowned?" she asked, presently.

"No one that I know of. Mr. Musgrave has run great risks, so has Mr. Thurston. To them, under God, many of the cottagers owe their lives."

Afterwards Anne learned that no one had been braver and more dauntless than the Methody parson himself; no one had dared greater risks; no one had done more for the helpless and terrified women and children than he! He had worked gallantly with James and Gerard, and

their work had been, not, as one would have anticipated, on the salt-marsh, where the danger seemed most imminent, and towards which they had each and all addressed themselves at the outset. The truth was, that the marsh was under water much earlier than one would have supposed; the great *bore* did the mischief. Its mighty waves advanced with an impetuosity that nothing could withstand. The sea-wall shuddered and groaned as the heavy mass of water broke against it; then it quaked to its sturdy foundations; then the huge stones, well quarried as they had been, and firmly cemented, were upheaved, as the solid rock is upheaved in the first throes of an earthquake. Another minute, and the sea-wall, the temporary breakwater, and the "works" were one mass of wreck and ruin. Over and through the demolished and fast-dispersing structures swept the triumphant tide; the men, seeing what was impending, fled for their lives; and the cottagers at the head of the marsh, panic-stricken at the rapid rising of the waters, and the swift deepening and widening of the old river-bed and of the newly-cut dyke at one and the same time, retreated to the higher grounds, not waiting to save any portion of their property. So that, when Gerard and James approached the marsh-head, they found the place abandoned, and the destruction of the embankments complete; while the cottagers, for the most part the workmen employed on the drainage, with their wives and children, told the story of their escape, and assured them that the place was quite deserted. Gerard inquired particularly about the school, and found that no children had attended that morning, and that the schoolmistress herself had been seen in a secure place half an hour before.

There was, positively, then, nothing to be done on the marsh; the horses, and pigs, and poultry it was impossible to save, and, as to the buildings, they must be left to their fate. Only, if boats could be obtained, some fur-

niture and other properties of the poor people might be rescued, though, as every one at once declared, no power on earth could bring the boats round under the cliffs: they would be exposed to all the fury of the raging Channel-tide, and must be dashed in pieces, and those who manned them lost. It was not then apparent, as it was a little later, that there was an inland communication; that the mosses and lowlands, and even the lower part of the town, were all navigable for the regular fishing-boats; that one could row from Cockleham to the Priory-church, and thence to the great marsh, without catching a sight even of the sea itself.

The flood increased so rapidly, and the people were so aghast—so little prepared for the water advancing further than the redeemed lands—that those who were willing to give themselves to the service of others found abundance of occupation close at hand; and Mr. Musgrave, and Mr. Thurston, and the Methody parson, had their hands full, and could only think of the duty of each moment as it presented itself and clamoured for discharge.

It was a strange sight; the boats riding where, in the memory of man, no boat had ever ridden before; a vast lake spreading round the ancient church, overflowing the grey cloisters, covering the mouldering gravestones, and dashing against the walls of the beautiful old chapter-house! As for the two little rivers that insulated the church, they had become broad, rushing torrents, mingling their fresh waters with the salt sea-foam, and carrying all before them! When would this great tide turn? Surely it was high-water time, according to the almanacks; and yet the waves were rising still!

> "Men said it was a stolen tyde:
> The Lord that sent it, He knows all!".

A number of poor women, driven from their homes, with their children clinging to them, gathered round Anne

and Ebenezer as they approached. But Ebenezer waved them away, with the air of one whose mission is before him, and who may not be hindered.

"Nay! stop me not!" he cried, almost fiercely, as a girl in her agony of terror pressed upon him, and besought him to pray for mercy on them all. "Call upon the Lord yourselves! call, and stay not! wrestle and implore till the waters cease! This is His mighty hand and His outstretched arm. This is the punishment of your sins—the reward of your iniquities! Behold! He speaks to you by water now; a day is fast coming when He will speak by fire! Listen this day—this hour! Hear His voice, and repent! *Repent*, I say—REPENT!" And he seized, as he spoke, a flat-bottomed boat, that some one had just abandoned; he lifted Anne up, as if she had been a baby, and placed her in it; and, seeing one of the Cockleham men near at hand, he pressed him also into the service, saying, "In my Master's name, I bid you come with me, Rigg! there is work for you to do; there is a human life—perhaps a soul—to be saved!"

"Ye need na bid me, maister," returned Rigg, clutching an oar, and beginning to right the boat. "It's nae gate o' mine t' sit ashore when there's thruble on t' watters. I'll gang wi' ye and wi' Miss Musgrave anywheers, and the gude Lord gang wi' us. Who is't ye're after, Maister Tonks?"

"Mrs. Thurston is at the school-house!"

"T' lady o' t' Holt! Gude Lord ha' mercy! Row awa', Maister Tonks, an' ye be a mon indeed! Whatten's stane and mortar and t' strangest timmer against sic a sea as 'll be ragin' on the marsh? Row awa', and dinna spare. Where's Squoire?"

Anne told him how she had seen him last battling with the waves.

"The gude Lord ha' mercy! the gude Lord be wi' 'em! Row awa', mon, I say," was all the answer Humphrey

Rigg could give, while he pulled vigorously at his oars. He had taken a pair, and Ebenezer had another pair. Anne took the helm; she had learned how to steer, years ago, for the fun of the thing; now she was thankful for the knowledge.

"I'm glad to find you trust in the Lord, Rigg," said Mr. Tonks, when they were fairly on their way, but beating against the still advancing tide, which ever and anon almost turned the boat-head round. "I'm glad to think the word spoken in weakness on Sabbath evenings has not fallen in stony places."

"Hoot, mon! hoot!" cried Humphrey; "I knowed t' Lord, blessed be His holy name, years afore ye cam to these pairts. Ye Methodies think naebody's teached at a' if ye dinna ha' t' teachin' o' 'em! Hech, sirs! they that gangs down t' sea in booats—its a' ane, I reckon, wi' t' ships—that does business in grat watters—they see the works o' t' Lord, and they leern t' putten their trust in Him. But dinna praich, mon, noo; there's a toime for t' praichin', and a toime for hauldin' peace; loikewise a toime for doin' t' work t' Lord ha' set ane on."

Thus reproved, Ebenezer held his tongue, which was very much to his credit; for his soul yearned within him to "improve the occasion," chiefly for Miss Musgrave's benefit. As they, with great toil and pains, and at some peril, rounded a point where two streams met, Anne, looking up to the tower where the bells were still at intervals giving forth their mournful chime, saw Captain Conyngham leaning out of one of the loopholes, high up in the turret, looking deplorably, and telegraphing to them to come to his assistance. As he was quite safe, however, Anne shook her head, and steered resolutely by way of Skeldale Moss to the great marsh.

In the meantime Gerard had made good his passage through the deep, rough waves, and he was holding in his arms the half-insensible Clarice, who, however, seemed as

happy in her resting-place as if they were safe on their own hearthstone at Canonbury Holt. And on the bed, holding Clarice's disengaged hand, was little Annie Bruntskill, the schoolmistress's daughter. When Mrs. Thurston arrived that morning, sorely wearied and blown about on her wild walk, she had found no scholars awaiting her, the mothers keeping the children in because of the great storm; but Mrs. Bruntskill was glad to see her, and so was Annie, the little invalid, who was recovering from low fever. Mrs. Bruntskill, seeing that Clarice took a book, and began to read to the child, asked her if she would mind being left a little while; she had not the necessary day's provisions in the house, and Dr. Wilson said Annie must have her bit of meat, and she had had none yesterday. Would Madam mind her running up to Thomas Sargent's to get a wee scrapie of neck of mutton? Ellen Lawson, from the nearest cottage, would come in and bide down in the kitchen.

Clarice had no objection to be left for half an hour with little Annie; but as for Ellen Lawson, she would rather not have her, if Mrs. Bruntskill did not need her services. Lyulph, for once, had followed her that morning, and he was with her. And, as the schoolmistress had no great faith in Nelly's good behaviour, she was glad not to call her in; and she made up her peat-fire, put the pot on the hob, and thankfully departed. So it came to pass that Clarice and the little girl were left alone in the house, and the first intimation of their danger was given by the sudden rush and dash of a great wave against the lower window. Even then they might have fled; the water was very shallow, and the path towards the moss and upwards to the moor was still dry at twenty paces from the back door. But Clarice was terrified and bewildered; and she knew she had not strength to carry the child, who was too weak, as well as too frightened, to walk, or, rather, wade through the fast rising flood. And while she lingered the

opportunity was lost; the waves rose so fast that it would have needed a strong man to breast their power, and Clarice was feeble and tired with her wild walk across the moor. Faster and faster rose the water! She went downstairs, or, rather, she tried to do so, but was stopped several steps from the bottom, and she had to retreat immediately. And Lyulph snuffed at the salt water, and howled and whined, and, for the first time since he had called her mistress, came and licked her hand. His caress did not comfort her; it rather increased her terror, for, surely, the animal came to her for refuge; he, too, was very ill at ease; and Annie began to sob and cry out for her mother. In a very short time, unless the tide ebbed, Clarice saw that the water would reach them; and then, in her extremity, she took her red shawl and fastened it outside the casement, and a minute afterwards wrote the message on the tablets, showed them to Lyulph, and made them fast to his collar, saying, "Go, good dog; take those to your master!"

He looked at her stedfastly for a moment, then he licked her hand again, as if to assure her of his fidelity, and sprang through the open window, and swam to the rocky ledge where Anne and Gerard were then standing.

"Oh! save us! save us, Gerard!" she cried, flinging herself into her husband's extended arms, and hiding her face on his bosom. It was a poor shelter in that awful hour; but to Clarice it seemed as if nothing could harm her now. For one minute Gerard weighed the possibility of swimming with her to the rocks, and he even thought whether he could not entrust the child to Lyulph, who, of course, returned with him, and lay panting at his feet. But a little reflection told him that this feat was impracticable; it would be hopeless to attempt it; the waves were so strong; they had tasked his utmost strength and skill already. How would it be with his wife on one arm,

and only the other to fight against the stream? Slight as Clarice was, it could not be done. Had there been any one on the rocks to aid him in landing, it might have been. How he regretted that he had allowed Anne to go for the boats, which could never reach in time!

"Shall we be drowned?" asked Clarice, as a wave came sobbing on the window-ledge. "Oh! Gerard, *must* we die?"

"If it is God's will, my love! Poor little Clarice! do not be frightened; it will soon be over, and we will go together!"

"No!" she said, suddenly rising; "you swam here, and you can swim back again. I will not have you die, Gerard! No, darling! you must live and be happy yet for many years."

"If there were only anything of a landing-place; but the rocks are steep and rugged. Perhaps God will send us some help, Clarice, dear; let us wait and see. If not, He only calls us to see His face. I will hold you in my arms when it comes, and death will soon be past, and we shall wake up together in *His* presence. Be comforted. my child."

"And we shall see our baby, Gerard; both our babies—our little Elsie, and the one who went long ago, our boy, who left us when we were at Munich."

"Yes, dear; and those we leave will come to us ere long."

"But, Gerard, I cannot, will not, have you sacrificed, Oh, darling, you do not know me! my love is no selfish woman's love. I would have you saved, though I must go! It is only what would have happened soon in any case; the parting only comes a few months earlier. Kiss me, my beloved, and go; perhaps Lyulph could save the child."

"Not another word, Clarice! No power on earth shall induce me to leave you. We will be saved together or

die together! Husband and wife are not to be lightly parted; are they, Clarice?"

Clarice only replied by clasping him more closely, and kissing him, as it seemed to him afterwards, with the pent-in tenderness and passion of long years. Then she said no more, and she drew little Annie closer to her, and told her not to be afraid, for Jesus Himself would come for her, and all would be well. And the child ceased weeping, and waited calmly for the end.

It seemed very near now; for already the waters were pouring in at the window, and rushing under the door, and the house itself seemed tottering. It was only a temporary structure, though firm enough in its way; but what can withstand the fury of the sea? And the three sat quietly, for the most part silent, but now and then whispering to each other words of cheer and comfort. Even little Annie said, "Mrs. Thurston, it says in the Bible there is na mair sea in heaven. It will be a' fair and bright *there*."

Suddenly Lyulph, who had been pacing the little room, trying to shake off the wet, and growling as the spray dashed in his face, began to bark loudly. Then he sprang through the window, and disappeared.

"The big doggie's gone," said Annie, wistfully.

"That was a bark of welcome," cried Gerard, rising and looking out. "Yes, here they are! The God of heaven be praised! Clarice, my child, we are saved, we are saved!"

But Clarice, in the moment of relief, lost consciousness, and Gerard laid her senseless in Anne's arms; then he took the child and placed her safely in the boat; Lyulph gravely stepped from the window, and Gerard took the helm, and they put off as rapidly as possible, for already the roof was giving way, and the rafters were falling into splinters, and the whole building was quivering as wave after wave broke over it. The boat had not reached them

a minute too soon. When they were safely landed, they looked back, and there was no school-house—only boiling surges and masses of something, which was fast being washed into shreds and atoms, like the wreck of a vessel just foundered in the storm.

A little while afterwards, and the tide ebbed—ebbed as rapidly as it had risen. But there was sorrow and wailing throughout Chalfonts, and over all that country side; some weeping for their dead, some mourning over loss of property—all sad and awe-stricken at the terrible visitation. Yet in some houses was heard the voice of thanksgiving and humble, hearty praise; in none more hearty, more fervent, than in Canonbury Holt, and at the Farm, although Musgrave and Thurston were now comparatively poor men.

CHAPTER XLII.

BETTER FAR.

A LONG and weary winter succeeded "the great tide"—a winter of sickness, and privation, and bereavement. Clarice never crossed the threshold of her home, and Bertie had a long and severe illness; and then the baby fell into a languishing state,—for some months gave them great anxiety.

It was also a very inclement winter; the mountain-tops were white over a week or so after the inundation, and the snow upon them grew deeper and deeper till they stood up against the sky, on clear, frosty days, like veritable Alpine ranges. There were great drifts in the valleys, and several human lives were lost, and many sheep perished, in one long storm that lasted from New Year's-

eve to the second week of February. For in the north they count it as one storm so long as the snow lies unmelted on the ground. Sometimes for days together the intercourse between the Holt and the Farm was necessarily suspended: going to church was out of the question; Chalfonts, as far as the women were concerned, might have been ten miles distant, and the post came in irregularly, or not at all, for the coaches could not run, and even the main line of rail was blocked up more than once between Penmount and Lunechester. As for the unfortunate mosses and marshes, they were flooded at every high spring-tide, the breakwaters being gone, and the drain-dykes being for the most part filled up with sand, and sea-drift, and alluvial deposit. But happily the waters never extended beyond certain limits, though people never saw the great moss or the salt-marsh flooded without a terrible dread and a sinking of the heart.

The snow went away at last, though it returned again and again; and about this time Anne began to be very much at Canonbury Holt. Clarice was fading fast; she had not really rallied all the winter. That awful day in September had "given her her death," people said, and doubtless it had accelerated the course of disease, and hastened on results that otherwise might have been longer in developing.

In January Clarice had an attack of bronchitis, which very much reduced her strength, and Dr. Wilson prescribed change of climate, as soon as ever it should be possible for her to take a journey. And when Anne came up one fine March day Gerard was talking about Nice and Mentone, and wondering whether Cannes would not be better, as the spring was already on its way. Clarice let him talk on, plan, and refer to maps and routes; and when he told her he thought she might be ready to start in a fortnight or three weeks, she replied gently, "Very

well, dear Gerard; if Dr. Wilson says I may go, I shall be quite willing."

But when she was left alone with Anne, she said, "I do not like to contradict Gerard; but you know, Anne, I shall never leave the Holt till they carry me out, and lay me by my little Elsie yonder. You do not think I am going to get better?"

"I fear not; that is, really better—permanently so! But, Clarice, you know how a soft, mild climate restored me. I think you will always be delicate; but with tender care we may keep you a long time yet."

"Anne, dear! I want you to know the truth: I am dying *now!*"

"What makes you think so? You are not worse?" And Anne looked earnestly at the quiet, faded face. She was but little changed there; if anything, it was fresher and brighter than usual; there was certainly a faint tinge of delicate rose on the sunken cheeks, and the sweet blue eyes were not so dull and heavy as they had been all the winter.

"I suppose when one has been ill so long as I have," returned Clarice, "one always knows when one's hour is come! I have felt no new symptom, and I feel revived, instead of worse; still, something tells me that I am going. Do you see those primroses in the moss? The gardener sent them up for me because he knows I love them at this time of the year. Well, when all the flowers are gone, I shall be gone too! We have both a few days left."

"Clarice, dear, it is bad of you to think so. I shall tell Gerard to send the primroses away."

"No; please don't. And it is not bad for me; I am not afraid; I would rather go, Anne; indeed it is better for me, better for us all. I think Gerard will feel lonely at first, he has grown used to me; but it will all come right. I wanted you so much to come here to-day, Anne, for I

felt that I could talk to you; I felt that I must thank you for all your goodness. If I had known you earlier in life, if I had had a mother like yours, I might have been a stronger, better woman; I might have been Gerard's help and comfort, and that long, bitter separation never need have been. Anne, how much I have to bless you for!"

"Nay, dear; the great blessing of all came to you before we ever met. You were a Christian when first you went to Tylney House."

"Yes, and long before; but such a poor, weak, inconsistent Christian; though I did try to be patient, and to kiss the rod my own sinful folly had prepared. I am afraid, though, I turned to God because I had no other to turn to. I thirsted for the living waters because the streams of earth ran dry. I sought the Pearl of great price because my gold and my gems had turned to worthless tinsel and crumbled in my hands. Anne, do you think God would accept such a heart?"

"It was His way of calling you, dear. God often strips us of all earthly joy, that in Him we may find a bliss unspeakable, a peace and rest that never leave us again. When He gives Himself, He makes the gift so precious that we wish for nothing more; the peace that He imparts is so full, that we would not change it, if we could, for any of the delights we have lost and mourned after; the cup that He puts into our faltering hands is so sweet, that we thirst no longer for any other draught. God sees His child satisfied with this world's vain pleasures, lost in vain delights, or given up to sinful indulgences; and He smites the cherished idols, whatever they may be, that the wilful child may know how frail they are, and so with emptied arms and treasure lost seek his chief happiness no longer in the creature, but in his Father, God."

"I thank God that He did call me. Ah, Anne, how foolish I have been! What a wasted life is mine!"

"Not quite wasted, Clarice. I think since I have known you you have done your work in the world."

"Very imperfectly. I have always been discontented. There has always been in my heart an unsatisfied longing for something not bestowed. Even my work has not been that which I should have chosen of my own will. Only it seemed that it came to me, the simple duty which I was bidden to take up, and I dared not disobey. But, Anne, the discontent is gone now; I am quite satisfied with all that is, and all that has been. God is so good, so kind to me. He soothes away all my sorrows; He gives me an infinite peace; and, to crown all, He is taking me home to Himself. It is better far that I should go, dear; *better far.*"

Anne could not speak, she could only smooth the silvery bands of hair, and hold the little wasted figure more closely in her arms. She did not know till then how dear Clarice had become to her.

Presently Clarice said, "Anne, you cannot think how clear it all seems at last! One sees so well how one's steps have all been ordered, how everything has been turned to good. If I had to live my life, or any part of it, over again, I think I should *trust* more fully. Oh, a perfect childlike faith in one's Heavenly Father must be the very essence of a perfect happiness! Nothing really to harm one; nothing to fear; only to rest quietly, as I do now, in Christ's arms, and leave all care to Him."

After that evening Clarice visibly declined, and Gerard knew that the southern journey, which was all arranged, would never be taken. Another journey was before her. She was going to a fairer land than any earth can show—to the land on the other side the river of death; but first the dark valley must be passed, and the solemn stream be crossed. And the timid, shrinking woman did not fear. One who long centuries ago went the same way, and left in His track a radiance that the lapse of ages had

not dimmed, was with her now, when heart and flesh were failing; and she could say, "*Thou* art with me: Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me!"

Anne seldom left her; but one afternoon she was called to the Farm on business; she was to return again that night, and she thought that Clarice seemed better. And just as the twilight shadows gathered round the fair environs of that stately home, the summons came; Clarice's spirit was to depart with the passing of the lovely April day. Gerard's arms were round her, and her head was pillowed on his bosom; years back she had longed for that loved resting-place, and thought how sweet it would be so to die; and now it was come, and in her husband's close embrace death seemed beautiful. She could feel his warm clasp upon her own cold, feeble fingers, but she could scarcely see his face for the dimness that had fallen on all about her. Her voice, too, was nearly gone, but she could whisper, "God bless you, Gerard, my husband! And God bless dear Anne! tell her that I thought of her to the last."

"I wish she were here, dear," said Gerard; "she will be so grieved that she was away."

"Oh, my darling! I am glad to be alone with you in this hour. I want you to say once more you forgive me for all the past."

"It was you who had most to forgive, Clarice; I was very hard, very cruel to you."

"Hush, dear! don't say so now. You have been all goodness, all kindness. Still I know I was never the wife that you should have chosen; I was always weak, and passionate, and foolish. And I have felt so tired, Gerard; I am such a poor little creature. It is very good of God to take me to Himself; I am weary, and so He giveth His beloved sleep."

And the twilight fell, and the shadows deepened, and a great peace filled the hearts of the two who were on the

eve of separation. For all his pain and sadness, great was Gerard's joy that he had taken her back again and sheltered her—ay, and *loved* her as he had never loved her in the old passionate days of her girlish beauty. The last three years had been years of calm content and quiet, sacred happiness to him at least; and her happiness, as now she looked back upon it, had been far deeper and fuller than she had all the while admitted or acknowledged to herself.

And so she lay gently dying, with the dying day that had been so fair and sweet and calmly bright. "Better far," she murmured once, when Gerard thought her voice was hushed for ever.

"What is better far, darling?"

"To go to God, to rest in my Father's house, to see His glorious face, to wait till you and Anne come! Somehow I think you will come together!" Then, after a few minutes' stupor—"Yes, they will go home together, my dearest Gerard and dear Anne. God bless Anne and Gerard!"

These two dear names were the last she ever spoke. When the lingering beam died from the mountain-tops, when the soft light of the silvery planet streamed upon the placid sea, Clarice was gone, "past night, past day," into the land where there is no more night.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE PROBLEM SOLVED.

It was the August twelvemonths after Clarice's death, and Chalfonts was beginning to wear its old aspect again. The year after the great tide had been a most fruitful one; the

harvest was unusually heavy, and the barns and storehouses were once more filled to overflowing. Also, the railway, spite of all obstacles, and of all warnings and lugubrious prophecies, was finished, and trains actually commenced to run between Keirmouth and St. Ulpha's. A little later, and they would go to Bekanks Abbey and to Garrow, with its splendid natural harbour and its grand capacities, that are to render it the rival of wealthy, prosperous Easthambury before many years are past.

And engineering triumphed; for the railway, by the help of a new system of drainage, powerful and scientifically constructed embankments, and wise diversion of numerous small channels, really did shut out the sea. At least it has done so till this day, and seems likely to do so till the end of time; and the mosses are again fertile, and the salt-marshes are showing symptoms of successful cultivation, and the cockle-gathering flourishes! Also, at divers seasons of the year, there are great hauls of fish, chiefly flooks and delicious salmon mort. And Cockleham prospers.

Of course both James and Gerard had to suffer in a pecuniary point of view; and once, in the early spring, just about the time of Clarice's death, there had been a short time when James had been tempted to say with one of old, "All these things are against me!" The loss caused by the inundation had been heavy; nearly every one in and about Chalfonts had suffered from it, though none had felt the visitation so heavily as had Mr. Musgrave and the master of the Holt.

But Gerard was far richer than any one had guessed; and the thousands that the sea had washed away and swallowed up with that September tide did not really straiten him. He had only been using up the accumulated interest of funds that he knew not how otherwise to apply; and he cared little for money for its own sake. His venture had given employment to several hundreds of people; the

work itself, though inefficient, had incited himself and others to fresh exertions; and the flood would have risen just the same, and have done an equal amount of mischief, had no redemption of the waste lands ever been attempted. He had feared at one time that the drains and dykes had facilitated the mischief, or rather helped it on when once it had occurred; but it had been shown to him by men of approved skill that but for his new channels the evil would have been far more disastrous, more widely spread; and of course he held out a brother's hand to James, and gave him right willingly the help he needed.

As for Bertie, she came out quite a little heroine in the day of adversity, cheering up her husband, going with him into the question of retrenchments both upon the farm and in the house, and bidding him not mind anything so long as they were all together, a family unbroken by bereavement. And she had always a bright smile for him, or a glance of sweetest sympathy, when he came in from his walks about the farm, tired, and harassed, and depressed. "It will all come right, love, in time!" she would say cheerily. "Nay, my dear James, do not let us trouble over it! It is only *money*, after all! It might have been so much worse! And we are young and strong, and we can work, and we are *together* still. Have patience, darling! don't be down-hearted; it is only a cloud that hides the sun, and the good God will make it all brighter again when He sees that it is best for us. We will put our trust in Him, then we shall never be confounded."

And so James always found comfort in his brave little wife, and she made him more dumplings than ever.

I told you that it was August again, and a very brilliant August it was, and the yellow corn was waving in the mellow sunshine. It would be a good fruit year, too, for apples and pears were thick upon the orchard trees, and the Holt gardens were rich in downy peaches, fragrant apricots, and luscious, bloomy plums. Also, the poor

rejoiced in an abundance of that homely root—the potato. And again Gerard went to the Farm to beg for a cup of tea, and afterwards, in the cool of the evening, he asked Anne to walk with him across the moor, where already the purple heather was glowing in the sunset rays.

They talked tranquilly of many things, of the accident which had happened to Clara Littledale's eldest boy. Mr. Redmayne had been in that day to tell how he had fallen from his pony, and put his shoulder out; of Jessie, Clara's sister, the brilliant, witty, scholarly Jessie, who had given all the disconsolate curates their *congé*, and was about to be married to Dr. Wilson; and, *apropos* of a train that was sweeping and screaming alongside the estuary, of the new railway, and its advantages, and of the "old coach time," as already they began to call it. But at last Gerard said, "Anne, do you remember our first meeting; no, not exactly the first, but our first conversation down there on the salt-marsh?"

"Yes, it was when I helped you out of the marsh."

"But the first time we talked together? It was Christmas-eve, and I told you I had no trust in God."

"Was it really so?"

"I think it was. I had hardened my heart so long. I tried to put God out of my thoughts, to live my life just as I pleased, irrespective of His will, and despising all my fellow-men. Do you recollect asking me what I supposed God gave me my life for?"

"Yes; and it seemed to be a problem that perplexed you greatly—a problem of which, in spite of an assumed carelessness, you were bent on seeking the solution."

"Yes, I was always asking myself, since the good which I was so capable of appreciating had not fallen to my share, why I had been sent into the world at all. Why was I endowed with capacities for deep, pure happiness, and yet born to misery? Why on me should rest the shadow and the darkness, while others, not more deserv-

ing than I, walked in the warm, bright sunshine? Such were the questions I put to myself, and fierce was the strife when I could find no answer to them. It was you, Anne, who showed me the first glimmer of light; it was only a faint streak, just gleaming through some chinks in my soul's prison-house of sullen gloom and wicked unbelief; but by God's grace I sought that pale, uncertain ray, till it brightened and broadened, and my prison-walls fell down, and I stood a free man in God's glad world, rejoicing in the glorious beams of His great love and wisdom. I saw then how I had lived to myself, how in this I had sinned, and how through this I had suffered. I knew straightway that I was not my own, that I was bought with a price, that henceforth I must live to the glory of God. And then I had my being in a new and beautiful world, of which before I had known nothing. I saw my Father's hand in all the splendours of creation. I read His superscription on the mountains. I heard His voice in the thunders of the sea. I beheld His goodness in the sweetness of a pure, true love, in all family joys, in social intercourse, in pleasant friendships; and my heart was singing one perpetual doxology."

"And so the problem was solved?"

"Not quite. I thought it was; but I did not perceive the full solution till afterwards, till my cup of joy was dashed from my lips, and all my sweetest hopes laid low. Then, indeed, when I least expected to read clearly any lesson of God's providence, the problem of my life was solved."

"Will you tell me what was the solution?"

"Simply this: it was what any child in a Sunday-school may learn and understand—that my life was given to me for God's glory, also for the perfection of my being, by which, indeed, God would be glorified. Anne, it seemed so easy to glorify Him when all was as I wished it. But when He called me to resign my cherished happiness,

when He bade me loosen my hold on all that I had clasped so closely, when He said in tones I dared not disobey, 'Take up thy cross, and follow Me,' then it was not so easy,—that is to say, it was not easy at the first, though it became so afterwards. We may speak of that time now, may we not? Seven long years ago! Oh, what bitterness it was!"

"Yet out of the bitterness came sweetness?"

"Such a sweetness as otherwise I had never comprehended—the sweetness of bowing the will, of kissing the chastening rod, of taking up one's duty, and reverently fulfilling it; the sweetness of an unwavering faith, that through it all the problem of my life, of yours, of *her* poor shadowed life, was being worked out in lines and letters of the purest gold. But if you had not been strong, Anne, I am afraid my own new-born strength would have failed me—as, indeed, it nearly did, in all the first surprise of that great anguish."

"I think not, Gerard! I think you would never have lost your trust in God again. Though in the first moment you might have faltered, you would soon have risen from the dust and ashes of despair, and have blessed God for all! You would have felt, which very quickly you did feel, that out of sorrow the soul rises to a nobler life; that pain has its uses; that our Father always gives more than He takes away. As I read somewhere the other day, 'God is better than His promise, if He takes from man a long lease and gives him a freehold of a greater value.' If only He give *faith*, perfect faith and joy in Himself, all the rest may go! Whatever betides, it will be *for the best!*"

"Thus, then, I read the solution of the problem: God made us for His glory; and to His glory all lives must tend, whether it be in work or in waiting, in doing or in suffering, in sunshine or in shadow, in the arid, burning desert, or in the green pastures, beside the still waters.

We are born to His glory; every little circumstance of our lives so works, and so blends together in one mysterious but harmonious whole, that He is glorified. We die to His glory; and to His glory will be our ineffably blissful life in the world beyond the grave!"

"Thank God! thank God! Only let us recognise always that 'all our springs are in Him!'"

The purple light was fading now, and soft tints of pearl and amethyst were on the broad, wet sands just left by the receding tide. They turned to go home.

"When will you come to the Holt, Anne?" asked Gerard, pausing as they came to the point whence the woods of Aldingham were visible.

"I will come—soon!"

"Why not at once? I have waited patiently till now. Anne, dear! you know Clarice would have you come."

"Dear Clarice!" and Anne's eyes filled with tears. But there was no pain at her heart, as there might have been had she swerved from the right. Anne had suffered keenly, but she had never wavered. Had it been otherwise there would have been a thorn in the rose she now might pluck—the perfect joy and blessing of this hour would have been marred. Silently once more she thanked her God, who had borne her safely through perilous paths, and brought her at last into a pleasant place, and given her her heart's desire. "Her heart's desire!" Yes! had she snatched at it, had she fiercely struggled for it, had she claimed it lawlessly, would it have been as it was now—all peace and joy, intense yet calm, and deep thanksgiving?

"I will come, Gerard, when mamma says I may."

"I have spoken to her, and to James and Bertie; and they see no reason why you should not come within a month."

"Then I will come!"

"Bless you, my darling! and oh, bless God for giving you to me at last—at last!"

* * * * * * *

There is little more to tell. I need say nothing more of Amy and her husband, nor of little Adeline, who is growing up a most unhappy girl; nor of Georgy, who is now a widow, and in desperation has joined a semi-Romish sisterhood; nor of Hilda, who became the wife of one of Jessie Redmayne's discarded curates, upon his presentation to a living in the South. But I must say that Judy and her Methody parson did *not* go to Fiji, after all; they live in London, and teach and preach to the heathen in the worst localities of that great city; and Mr. and Mrs. Ebenezer Tonks are much respected; and Mrs. Ebenezer "*leads* a class," and has wonderful success with the wives and daughters of costermongers and cats'-meat-men, and others of the very lowest, and too frequently the vilest grades. And she corresponds regularly with Bertie and with Mrs. Thurston.

For Anne and Gerard were married early in September; and twelve months afterwards the bells of the Priory-church were ringing merrily in honour of the birth of the heir of Canonbury Holt.

As for James and Bertie, they are happy as they deserve to be, and more I cannot say.

THE END.

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